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"TRYING TO SUCCEED": A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF "SUCCESS" IN TEACHING/LEARNING SPANISH IN A HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM

By

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ABSTRACT

TRYING TO SUCCEED: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY OF PERCEPTIONS OF "SUCCESS" IN TEACHING/LEARNING SPANISH IN A HIGH SCHOOL CLASSROOM

By

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The purpose of this study was to examine and describe the scope and strength of existing beliefs and behaviors characterizing participants' perceptions of "success" in teaching and learning foreign language in a high school classroom. The study examined participants' perceptions of their mission within the school and classroom, their normative patterns of classroom communication, and their daily transactions within the organization that determined perceptions of relative "success."

A fieldwork research approach was used to best gain insight into participants' explicit motivations as well as underlying forces that appeared to drive their actions in the learning environment. The setting of this study was a midwestern urban high school of approximately 2,000 students. A semester-long Spanish II section of 23 students and their first-year teacher were the subjects of the study. Data were gathered through extensive participant observation and recorded in fieldnotes, documents and transcriptions of open-ended interviews.

Findings indicated that there were multiple and conflicting definitions of success in foreign language study. Credentialing for

high school graduation or college entry motivated students. They measured success in terms of grades. For the teacher, communicative competency was the final goal.

This study also indicated that the classroom was not conducive to the acquisition of second language communicative skills. Such classroom communication patterns frustrated students since they differed considerably from communication norms in other classes. There was noticeable resistance to the functional use of Spanish in this setting.

The concept of "trying" as it pertained to both communication and achievement of a grade was particularly significant in this study. Trying to communicate involved risk, tolerance for error and a subjective measurement of how well the message was communicated. Trying to get a grade was tied into organizational norms. The teacher measured not only apparent achievement through test scores, but also determined the extent to which the student was "trying" to achieve through homework, class participation and extra credit.

Finally, this study showed powerful checks and balances that the organizational culture exerted on a new teacher's power to balance high standards of achievement with realities of enrollments.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Observing a classroom is not unlike watching a stage performance. What is immediately apparent on the stage is only a mere fraction of what lies behind the scenery and in front of the footlights. And, indeed, what one even perceives in the spotlight depends upon the backgrounds and assumptions of the various audiences or participants.

From one classroom, for example, emanates a complicated cross-section of constituent voices that echo expectations, motivations and definitions of success. Kaleidoscopic patterns and discordant harmonies emerge when these voices resound side by side:

The teacher's voice is heard:

"I enjoy teaching Spanish. I really do, and I enjoy doing a lot of oral practice and listening and all that. So what I really wanted them--of course I taught them the grammar, you know--but I wanted to put a lot of emphasis on the oral--oral practice."

And, as if in response, a local university professor's voice resounds:

"[These oral programs] create a frightening product of students who can speak, but can't read or write. As a university discipline, this doesn't make it."

Having heard neither of the above, student #1, speaks in tentative tones:

"Uh [I took Spanish] in case I wanted to get into some college and it required a foreign language, ya know."

But student #2 has no interest in college:

"Well, I need it to graduate for one thing."

And another classmate, who already speaks Spanish at home, adds still more contrast to the range of motivation:

"It's just I had it in junior high and then from there it's just given to me and [they] kept on giving it to me. They say if you get a good grade in it, you might as well keep it."

And then, from beyond the classroom walls echo parent voices:

"We insisted that he did take a foreign language for college entrance, and just to have it."

Some are much less confident and supportive:

"I told him he might as well take it although he didn't want it and didn't enjoy it...I told him to go ahead and get it over with..It's too bad it wasn't fun or enjoyable for him."

And always the tempo of administrative authority is heard:

"We are attempting to improve foreign language instruction in the building and improve that in terms of number--number of offerings--opportunity students have to select foreign language and seek to find ways to help teachers feel that are doing a better job in attracting students to foreign language."

All the while, the researcher listens for recurring themes and melodies:

Researcher: "How do you know you are successful in this particular class?"

Student: "I dunno. For me, it's gettin' a C in there."

Researcher: "What would make you think you're doing that well?"

Student: "Well, you see, it's what--O.K.-my dad last marking period--she talked to him and said she said if he turns in all the homework and stuff and all the stuff we do in class, I will give him a C, ya know. That's what she said, 'cause she knew it was hard for me. And I've done that this marking period."

Researcher: "Is it possible to get a C in a class and not learn anything?"

Student: "Um hum. Well, I'm doin' it right now."

The teacher's voice:

"I can't justify flunking him."

Indeed, under the surface of day-to-day activities in any classroom is found a wide range of motivations, expectations, patterns of acceptable behaviors and transactions that govern complicated issues of authority and accountability within the organizational culture of schooling.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study, then, is to examine and describe in detail a single high school foreign language classroom, to the end that such issues of purpose, authority and accountability might be revealed from within the context of the learning environment. A fieldwork research approach is used in order to best gain insight into participants' explicit motivations as well as the underlying forces that appear to drive their actions.

This research project comes at a time when high school foreign language enrollments in the United States are increasing. With renewed interest in "back-to-basics" academics and increased global awareness, foreign language is once again coming into favor, not only as a desirable part of the college preparatory curriculum, but as a part of revitalized efforts to make the American workforce economically competitive in world markets.

At the same time, there is within the field a thrust toward functional communicative proficiency as the final educational objective of such foreign language study. Underpinned by theories of second language acquisition, foreign language classroom teachers are being

encouraged to teach and measure such communicative competencies using a variety of relatively new methods and materials.

It is in light of these concerns for change and desires for educational improvement that this research study was undertaken from within the organizational culture of the classroom. James Baldwin spoke of change by stating, "Not everything that is faced can be changed, but nothing can be changed until it is faced." This study, therefore, seeks to face the high school foreign language classroom.

Likewise, it would appear that change within any organization might best begin with a prior knowledge of the scope and strength of the existing beliefs and behaviors that characterize that organizational culture. Participants' perception of their mission within the school and classroom culture, their normative patterns of behavior and their daily transactions within the organization combine to form a framework of potential constraint to effective organizational change.

This study examines and describes three such areas of situational constraint that may have bearing on the changes being suggested for the foreign language classroom. First, participants' multiple and conflicting definitions of "success" in foreign language study are examined.

Second, normative patterns of behavior within the classroom culture are examined and described. The unique nature of the foreign language classroom is highlighted, including the tension and resistance that participants exhibit when their accustomed classroom communication patterns are altered.

Third, transactive patterns within this organization that appear to allow participants to bargain issues of accountability and authority are examined and described. The concept of "trying" is examined first as it relates to "trying to communicate" and second as it relates to "trying to get a grade."

The overarching research question for this study deals with how participants, and their constituencies, are "trying to succeed" in the study of foreign language, and how the organizational culture of the school and the classroom potentially enhances or inhibits their pursuits.

Significance of the Study

The potential significance of this study to the existing body of research lies in three general areas. First, this study may add to the growing body of classroom-centered research generated from within foreign and second language classrooms. It appears that questions of relationships between foreign language curriculum and the culture of the high school classroom remain unexamined. According to VanPatten (1986), "It would seem, then, that one truly relevant area of inquiry (there are others as well) for foreign language teachers is 'what are the limits and boundaries placed upon classroom language acquisition due to the socio-psychological distance between students and L2 [second language] groups, lack of motivation, and other affective factors?' To put it in other words, 'How much language can really be acquired in the classroom?'" (VanPatten, 1986, p. 212). Although this study does not propose to measure acquisition, it does seek to describe in con-

siderable detail the context of the high school classroom, including the importance of measurable acquisition to participants, and the situational constraints imposed by the classroom culture on the process of language acquisition.

The second significance of this study is in its ability to complement other types of classroom-oriented research in second language learning. Some of these studies have examined and analyzed discourse in the second language classroom with emphasis on teacher talk and/or learner feedback (Richard-Amato, 1984; Wing, 1987; Guthrie, 1987; and Gaies, 1979). Other research has dealt with personal variables such as motivation and risk taking for the second language learner (Schumann and Schumann, 1977; Bailey, 1978; Beebe, 1983). The in-depth descriptions of the classroom culture and the interview data in this study may add to this body of research.

Taken together, the insights gained from a prolonged exposure to and analysis of interactions in the foreign/second language classroom setting will help provide more in-depth information to use in pre-service and in-service teacher education and in curriculum design as it pertains to foreign language offerings--either required or elective.

And finally, this study will add to the growing body of work that has been done in other content area or age level classroom settings. Augmenting the general knowledge of what life is really like in classrooms through the use of "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) may help to enhance teacher education programs in the general sense by providing to teacher educators and practicing and future teachers a dynamic picture of the classroom setting, with categorical similarities

and differences among and between content and age levels highlighted for further study.

Organization of the Text

The text of the study is divided into eight chapters. Following this brief introduction, the second chapter includes a brief historical framework, a review of the pilot study and a review of the related literature. The third chapter outlines the research questions, the research plan, the analysis of the data and the stylistic conventions.

Chapters four, five, six and seven detail the results of the study using the actions and words of the participants taken from fieldnotes and interview data. Chapter four describes the setting and introduces the motivations of the participants. In chapter five, the concept of "trying to communicate" is described including the actions and perceptions of both the students and teacher. In chapter six, "trying to get the grade" is described in considerable detail. Chapter seven examines the system of checks and balances within the organization that effects both the "workload" and the "knowledge load" that could be expected in this classroom.

The final chapter summarizes and interprets the findings, reflects on their significance, and considers broad implications and questions for further research.

CHAPTER TWO: THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM AND THE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE OF SCHOOLING

The purpose of this chapter is to outline the foundation upon which this research is grounded. The chapter includes a brief historical framework of the tradition of foreign language study in the United States. It continues with a review of the pilot study conducted in a university-level foreign language classroom. The chapter concludes with a review of the related literature in two areas--theory and research in foreign/second language teaching/learning; and theory and research dealing with organizational culture, curriculum and change in the contemporary American high school.

Historical Framework

In his study of school culture, Sarason (1982) suggests that the more things change, the more they remain the same. It is important, therefore, to place this case study into something of a historical perspective before linking it to the recent pilot study from which it emerges or to the review of the literature on which it rests.

The tradition of foreign language study came to the United States with its first colonists. Already embedded in the European Renaissance and in the background of American scholar-statesmen was the prominence of Latin, Greek and sometimes Hebrew as the three languages of scholar-

ship. According to Chastain (1980), the first recorded modern language classes were given in 1702 in Germantown, Pennsylvania. Spanish was included in the curriculum of the first academy founded in Philadelphia by Benjamin Franklin, although instruction was not given until 1766. In 1875, Harvard initiated the first foreign language requirement.

Education, itself, was an endeavor primarily reserved for society's elite during the first century and a half of American educational history. The same basic curriculum served all students. The publication of the report by the Committee of Ten in 1893 listed foreign language with English, mathematics, history and science as the core of the course of study. "It is of some interest," according to Pei, "that in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries up to eighty-five percent (85%) of our high school students, and practically one hundred percent (100%) of college students studied at least one language" (Pei, 1973, p. 128).

The period of functional philosophy that began in the early twentieth century and that was characterized by pedagogical progressivism appeared to wreak havoc with foreign language enrollments. Ravitch (1983) cites statistics showing that although overall high school enrollments were increasing during the period, the proportionate number of students studying foreign language dropped drastically between 1910 and the mid-1950's. By 1915 the proportion had slipped to 77%, and by 1955 only 20.6% of high school students studied any foreign language. Of the languages being studied, Spanish replaced German after World War I, introduced, according to Pei, "by reason of a hypothetical expanding Latin-American trade" (Pei, 1973, p. 43).

It is useful, however, to look not only at enrollments, but at attitudes, purposes and pedagogy of the period in an attempt to determine apparent motivation for or against language study. Why did many American students choose not to pursue any foreign language? And why did Americans choose only certain languages for study and exclude others?

Ferguson and Heath (1981) describe the complexity of language consciousness that appears to pervade American culture:

> Many Americans regard the use of another language in the USA as a sign of inferiority and disadvantage--to be kept hidden in one's own case and educated away in the case of others. They view the study of foreign languages in school as not particularly useful in achieving a good education or preparing for a career. Yet some of these same Americans are proud of a President who can speak a few words of Spanish on a public occasion and are enormously impressed by a European visitor who speaks several languages (p. xxviii).

In examining historical attitudes and motivations toward second language learning, at least two concepts must be considered. The first is the idea of "currency"; the second is the concept of "immediacy" as it relates to deference.

All languages have a characteristic of being able to serve their speakers in a variety of settings. For the purposes of this framework, that ability of a langauge to "buy" survival for some and preferred status for others, will be termed language "currency." For the period of declining enrollments in foreign language study (1910-mid 1950's), American English had the highest currency within the borders of our expanding nation as the unofficial language of the melting pot. Furthermore, English was becoming an accepted and respected currency

throughout the world as a language of political, military and economic importance.

The second concept is one of immediacy and deference. During this period, English was certainly the most immediate language for most Americans. Indeed, the average citizen, unlike his/her typical European counterpart, could live a lifetime without ever having to defer to others speaking a "foreign" language.

Given the practical reasons for not studying a foreign language, one must turn to the motivation of those who did choose to enroll. The choice of which foreign language to offer was couched in at least two basic assumptions--one rather ethnocentric in nature, the other pedagogical.

Nineteenth century views of Social Darwinism tended to equate western European civilization with "high culture." The study of "civilized languages" and literatures provided social and intellectual currency within the western European community of nations, including, to an extent, the United States. This was particularly true in the choice of French as a modern language of study. According to Pei, this European tradition held that "no person could consider himself truly educated unless he knew some French" (Pei, 1973, p. 44).

Nevertheless, it is also interesting and important to note that all foreign languages--classical and modern--were taught essentially the same way--through grammar, two-way translation, composition, occasional dictation, irregular verbs, vocabulary and analysis of structure. There was little or no conversation and the emphasis was "cultural" in terms of being considered "civilized."

The choice of foreign language in basic curriculum construction was defended for its ability to offer mental discipline, particularly for those of intellectual promise. Faunce and Bossing (1958) indicate that foreign language was a part of the mental discipline tradition, not for its functional properties, but rather for its ability to exercise and build the prized mental functions of discrimination and judgement. According to Unks (1983) two years was the standard length of time required to fulfill this requirement of brain exercise. He continues, however, that the two year minimum "had the result of exercising the brain into somnolent bliss, but at the same time preventing the student from knowing enough to use the language for any recognizable purpose" (Unks, 1983, p. 20).

The historical appearance of Sputnik in 1957 signaled a turning point in the trend of declining foreign language enrollments. There appeared to be two overlapping points of view taken by legislators and educators. The most obvious was that Sputnik must arouse the American people to the need for foreign language in a world suddenly grown smaller by reason of a space satellite. Functionalism became the watchword in communication. The federal government stood at the forefront. It offered National Defense Education scholarships to potential foreign language teachers and supplied funding for research into foreign language instructional methods and technological developments such as language laboratories. James Conant (1959) admonished schools to either teach enough foreign language to enable students to write and speak it, or stop teaching it altogether. His advice was heeded by some school districts who took into consideration the long-

term nature of formal, structurally-oriented language acquisition and developed programs beginning in the elementary schools.

Paradoxically, however, the expressed need for functional literacy was overshadowed by bureaucratic efforts to establish minimum requirements in its back-to-basics reaction to the perceived Russian threat. Most curriculum designers resurrected the two-year mandate for high school and college graduation. Therefore, although the government projected a need for proficiency and financially supported the concept, American students continued to enroll for many of the same reasons that had held historical significance. With increased requirements for graduation, many faced language study, albeit conversational, as a boresome but indispensible two-year chore associated with getting a diploma. The majority of high school students selected languages at random and according to availability. And, in reality, English still held the highest currency within the United States, so many Americans never used, at home or abroad, even the meager skills they had developed.

As the United States achieved its goal of space supremacy in the race to the moon, "basics" graduation requirements were eased and foreign language study predictably dropped off. The Joint National Commission for Language reported that only 15% of all American high school students studied foreign languages by 1981 (Lewis, 1981). Goodlad (1984) reported that in his Study of Schooling "foreign languages occupied a very small proportion of the secondary curriculum--4% of the allocation of teachers in the senior highs and a mere 2% in the junior high schools" (Goodlad, 1984, p. 216).

There have been several major shifts in American society and schooling that have affected and may continue to affect the attitudes and motivations of those who study foreign language. First, there has been a significant change in the way Americans view "culture" vis-a-vis language. During the social consciousness era of the 1960's and 1970's the elitist literary definition gave way to a more anthropological viewpoint in which other cultural groups were viewed with increased sensitivity and respect. Foreign language students were encouraged to study abroad and young Peace Corps volunteers used their language skills "in the field."

Domestically, another major change took place in the realm of foreign language study. The number of students learning English as a second language grew phenomenally as a result of increased immigration primarily from Spanish-speaking countries. In many geographic regions throughout the United States, Spanish was no longer considered a "foreign" language. For a period, federal legislation supported bilingual education philosophically and financially. Recent initiatives to make English the "official" language of the United States may prove to affect the amount of respect and sensitivity that is accorded to the study of foreign language, but this remains to be seen.

The 1980's was another fertile period in American educational history for reform. The publication of A Nation at Risk (1983) heralded another return to the quest for academic excellence, and once again foreign language study was strongly advocated as part of a basic curricular reform not only by the National Commission, but also by the 20th Century Fund (1982) and the College Board (1980).

In a similar fashion, colleges and universities have started, once again, to consider foreign language study as part of both entrance and graduation requirements. Indeed, it appears that foreign language study is again on the upswing.

Immediate Background--The Pilot Study

My interest in the study and teaching of foreign language is not new. As both a recent student of French at the university level and a twenty-year veteran teacher of Spanish at the middle school through university levels, I have played both the student and teacher roles. In addition, over the past few years I have been actively involved in fitting foreign language into the overall curriculum design of the school district in which I am employed. Therefore, I have been an integral part of the various waves and trends that have used foreign language to "beef up" basic curriculum, and, likewise, I have watched gifted colleagues lose teaching positions or be forced into minor fields as enrollments declined and foreign language took on the status of an elitist academic frill.

In addition, because of my varied background, I have also taught full-time at the elementary level and in other high school departments, including English and alternative education. I have come to realize that foreign language teaching and learning is somehow different from other educational endeavors. Caught between the required and elective domains, between the goals of mental discipline and communicative competence, teachers and students of foreign language seem to be asked

to "do everything" and prevented by a two-year implied limit from doing anything as well as possible.

It is not surprising, then, that when given the opportunity to develop my skills in field research in the three-course sequence in Fieldwork Research in Educational Settings, under the direction of Drs. Campbell, Singer and Erickson, I chose a foreign language classroom setting. I was anxious to take a researcher's point of view, standing back from my own domain and "making sense" of what was happening through the eyes of the participants.

The topic for this study originated from my work in that research sequence. In the winter/spring of 1986, I conducted a pilot study of teaching/learning foreign language in the formal classroom setting. The study was done in a university level beginning French class using a non-participant fieldwork approach similar to the one used in this research. Among my findings included assertions that:

1) participants expressed different and sometimes contradictory definitions for what they considered the study of foreign language to be;

2) the tone and curriculum (grammar study) were determined by a department administrator who saw foreign language study as an academic pursuit and drove the curriculum through written departmental examinations that measured structural accuracy with a system of points understood and utilized by all participants; and

3) students perceived that they were "learning French," but not necessarily by departmental standards, rather as much through their contact and cultural interchange with the foreign teaching assistant.

This research builds on the perceptions manifested in the pilot study and seeks to describe in greater detail the extent to which these

assertions are generalizable to a comprehensive high school setting. It also seeks to determine if there are other organizational or individual perceptions of "success" in foreign language teaching/learning.

Review of the Related Literature

Two areas of the related literature have a direct bearing on the issues raised in this study. The first includes theory and research in foreign/second language teaching/learning--with particular emphasis on the classroom as the language acquisition environment. The second area of interest is in theory and research dealing with the organizational culture, curriculum and change in the contemporary American high school--once again with the focus on foreign language.

Theory and Research in Foreign/Second Language Teaching/Learning

The most influential movement in language teaching in the last ten years is the one frequently called the communicative approach. First developed in Europe, it has taken on various adaptations for the American foreign language classroom.

Savignon (1983) distinguishes between language form and language function and identifies competencies that are grammatical, socio-linguistic, discourse-related and strategic. She points out that meaning depends in large part on common understanding among participants. She notes that in the language classroom competence may be valued as much or more for its form as for its communicative function. She says, "Within a classroom context, for example, the meaning of a

particular utterance may be no more than the demonstration of formal accuracy to earn an A on a test" (Savignon, 1983, p. 26).

Rivers (1983) divides learning activities into those called "skill-getting" and "skill-using," thus separating classroom time between grammar/explanation/drill and "communication activities." Most Spanish texts currently on the market appear to be based on this model of learning.

In recent years there has been a push from within the profession from the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Language (see ACTFL, 1982) for the development of proficiency among foreign language students. The term "proficiency" itself has caused more than a little controversy in its precise definition, but the overall movement focuses less on grammatical competence and more on competencies that relate to natural and/or strategic interchanges with native speakers of the target languages.

Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory (SLAT) has also been closely related to the foreign language classroom (Krashen & Terrell, 1983 and VanPatten, 1986). Central to the theory is the distinction between acquisition and learning. Acquisition takes place during communicative experiences, according to Krashen, and learning is associated with drill and study. Four hypotheses in Krashen's theory have possible bearing on the classroom learning experience. The Input Hypothesis describes the conditions under which acquisition takes place. It hypothesizes that students acquire when they understand messages in the target language. The Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that acquisition can be blocked by personal or motivational

factors or by high anxiety levels in the classroom. The Monitor Hypothesis suggests that the knowledge of the linguistic forms is not useful in the communication context in which there is not normally sufficient time to "monitor" or edit speech for accuracy. And finally, the Natural Order Hypothesis argues that grammatical structures are learned in a predictable order irrespective of formal instruction.

Although elements of Krashen's theory are debated, most researchers do acknowledge that meaningful input is important to language development. Hatch (1983) argues for negotiated input in which students are actively involved as conversational partners. Studies of classroom discourse, however, report that such use of the target language is not necessarily easy to achieve in the classroom setting. Guthrie (1987) points out the unique characteristics of the classroom as a language acquisition environment, highlighting "curricular and institutional requirements, student expectations regarding structure and direction, time constraints, and an imbalance of both fluency and authority in the teacher's favor" (Guthrie, 1987, p. 173). Wing (1987) found that in a typical 50 minute high school Spanish class period, an average of only 19 minutes was used for communicative purposes in the target language. Guthrie (1984) found that learners were often confused about what the teacher was doing with language, as there was frequent switching between linguistic and communicative language use. Student use of the target language was often driven by the classroom task sequence and supported by the use of the textbook.

The affective component, including motivation, and its effect on the development of overall language development, has also been con-

sidered in the research. According to Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) it is the affective component, not aptitude, that "allows" second language development in all areas of language--linguistic and non-linguistic. The research in this area is relevant when one considers the basic differences between foreign and second language learning. Foreign language skills are generally not used extensively outside of the classroom context. VanPatten (1986) says,

> The importance of the differences between the contexts of foreign and second language learning should not be underestimated...Most [of the foreign language students] have not chosen to study another language out of interest in the target language or culture. Many of them do not consider language learning a particularly valuable or enjoyable experience and are often resentful of the time and energy demanded to master a skill they don't want and never intend to use (VanPatten, 1986, p. 212).

Beebe (1983) relates psychological research on risk-taking with theoretical models of successful language learning. She highlights the difficulty of determining an abstract optimal level of risk for individual language learners in various settings, or among a variety of learners in the classroom environment. She points out that there is an inverse correlation between risk-taking and accuracy. She says, "If teachers want students to attempt difficult structures, to talk a great deal, and to volunteer new information when communicating, they must expect the accuracy levels will go down" (Beebe, 1983, p. 60). She suggests that this viewpoint might not be well-accepted in traditional settings where accuracy is considered important to high academic standards.

Although proficiency appears to be the goal in foreign language teaching/learning, Schulz (1986) cautions that the constraints of the classroom, including limited time and the artificiality of the setting, limit the number of communicative contexts that can be dealt with naturally. She points out the enormous burden placed on the teacher to create motivation in such an artificial setting. She also points out that foreign language teachers do not face homogeneous groups of learners--particularly in required courses. Teachers must consider a variety of learner aptitudes, attitudes, motivations, interests, needs and learning styles. She cautions curriculum designers to approach the proficiency movement with the care and respect it deserves rather than as another "bandwagon" movement in foreign language.

Theory and Research Dealing with Organizational Culture, Curriculum and Change in the Contemporary American High School

There is a significant body of research that focuses on the organizational culture and normative patterns of American schools. Several sources are relevant to this study.

Jackson's (1968) landmark work, Life in Classrooms, focuses on the elementary level classroom, but highlights characteristics that are common to the normative behaviors at the high school as well. He describes a crowded but stable physical environment and a constant social order that is characterized by cyclical activities, intricate systems of praise/reward and the prescriptive and restrictive power of the teacher. Jackson coined the phrase "hidden curriculum" and contrasted it with the academic demands of schools, citing instances

of students praised for "trying" or complying with the procedural expectations of the institution without succeeding academically.

Cuban's (1984) study of constancy and change in American classrooms addresses the strength and power of the normative systems in schooling. He measured the strength of "progressive ideas" on actual classroom practice during two reform periods, 1890-1940 and 1965-1975. He used measures including:

1) arrangement of space (rows vs.loosely arranged tables);
2) ratio of teacher to student talk;
3) instruction (whole group vs.individualized);
4) activities (teacher chosen/led vs. student chosen/led); and
5) student movement (none vs. free).

He found that despite the strong emphasis on progressive reform in the curriculum theories, teacher education programs and professional literature, very little actual change took place on the classroom level from 1890 to now. There is still almost a 90% likelihood of finding high school students sitting quietly in rows, listening to teacher-initiated instruction, much like classrooms at the turn of the century.

Cuban contends that teachers can exercise only situationally constrained choice over decisions made for their classrooms. He stresses that efficiency and convenience necessarily dominate the normative patterns of classrooms. His historical perspective seems to indicate that students lined in rows are conveniently and efficiently surveyed. Students taught as a whole are efficiently and conveniently dispatched. Students quiet and immobile are more easily managed in a crowded setting.

Sarason (1984), likewise, examined change within school culture. He highlights the complexity of the student/teacher roles and what he

calls the "constitutional issues of the classroom" that place authority in the teacher's hands while at the same time requiring him/her to sustain that authority despite changing levels of student compliance and inconsistent support from forces outside of the classroom.

The social construct of the classroom, itself, according to a study by Erickson and Shultz (1977) is "jointly constituted" by the participants, requiring a willingness on the part of each to follow along in the unfolding of events and/or be willing to be passively non-involved. Doyle (1986) notes that for an activity to succeed as a social event in the classroom, there have to be sufficient numbers of students willing to enact the participant roles, while the rest, at least, allow the activity to continue within the norms of appropriate classroom behavior held by the teacher, students or school staff. Sizer (1984) points out that students' apparent acquiescence to this authority structure in the school culture is, at best, provisional.

Goodlad's (1984) three-year Study of Schooling offers a description of the distinct and paradoxical character of the foreign language classroom. On one hand, like "non-academic" subjects (the arts, physical education and vocational education) the instruction in foreign language is task-oriented and is characterized by a high amount of student active involvement. The teacher provides a model and corrective feedback against which students can rather quickly check their own performance. Likewise, as with the arts and physical education, Goodlad's statistics show that foreign language was not highly valued as a school subject in American society, but <u>was</u> ranked substantially

higher than the "academics" in student interest in subjects now being taken.

On the other hand, foreign language classrooms shared certain characteristics with the academic areas. As in math and science, teachers relied heavily on textbook materials, and the workbook/ worksheet so commonly used in the teaching of academic subjects appeared frequently in foreign language classrooms as well.

Foreign language classrooms stood apart from either category in two areas. The time spent on instruction was greater in foreign language than for any other subject, and teachers of foreign language, more than teachers of other subjects, perceived themselves to be very much in control of all instructional decisions. "It appears," says Goodlad, "that they did not share this decision-making authority with their students" (Goodlad, 1984, p. 217).

The students surveyed in Goodlad's study were comparatively few in number and tended to self-select foreign language, enrolled [perhaps] through a need to be prepared for admission to any college or university. "Undoubtedly, this means a more highly motivated and more academically able student group than is found in subjects required for all or in subjects-of-last-resort for students experiencing learning difficulties" (Goodlad, 1984, p. 218).

Lafayette (1980) examined foreign language enrollment patterns in the state of Indiana and their implications on teacher workloads and language instruction. He points out the likelihood that foreign language teachers will have a minimum of four different preparations per day, with the strong possibility of multilevel classes in their

schedule. He found, also, that more than half of Indiana's second language teachers also teach in another academic area or teach part time.

Research that focuses on the transactive patterns in contemporary American high schools is also potentially relevant to this study.

Cusick (1973, 1983) has described a type of academic "bargain" that takes place between students and educators in American high schools. The features of the bargain include: relatively little concern for academic content; a tendency toward disengagement from specified knowledge; a characteristic substitution of small talk for concentrated academic interchange; improvisational instructional adaptation; "negotiation" of content, assignments and standards; and a high degree of teacher autonomy in managing engagement, content and personal interaction. Alternatively called the "bargain," the "arrangement" or the "treaty," this concept is prevalent in the qualitative literature of the past ten years or so (Sykes, 1984; Lightfoot, 1983; Sizer, 1984).

Powell, Farrar, and Cohen (1985), in the Shopping Mall High School crystalize the beliefs, patterns and themes that cut across school culture. They conclude that the central theme of American high schools is accommodation in the face of overwhelming diversity. In order to better describe this accommodation, an analogy is drawn between high schools and shopping malls. The results of their three-year research study indicate that both are profoundly consumer-oriented, both try to hold customers by offering something for everyone, and both cater to several small, but powerful, specialty markets. They point out that in the shopping mall high school there is no common definition of suc-

cess--that, indeed, what students and teachers even mean by "taking" or "teaching" courses is determined not by subjects or levels, alone, but also by the intentions of the participants. In the shopping mall high schools they describe, "failure" is characteristically something a student does to oneself by not attending or not behaving--performance is remarkably irrelevant.

Their study describes the vast majority of the student body--the unspecial--as a group essentially left alone to choose to bargain their academic engagement away. Only students with internal motivation to learn or with a political savvy or lobby find school a "special" place. Winners and losers, then, clearly emerge in this educational "marketplace" where mediocrity, achieved through tacit bargains, serves as a common denominator allowing the schools to at least be effective at a survival level for most, and at a better than functional level for some.

Sedlak, Wheeler, Pullin, and Cusick (1986) review the literature on high schools and address recent reform movements in light of this bargain struck between students and educators. They contend that "efforts to alter high school grading or graduation requirements, to reduce the distractions or extracurricular activities or to be stricter in disciplining students' misbehavior will not significantly increase student levels of academic achievement unless...the conditions for fostering an entirely new agreement between students and educators are created" (Sedlak et al., 1986, p. 3). They specify that academic disengagement is characteristic of three groups of students: 1) adolescents with weak school affiliation, 2) indifferent students,

and 3) passively resistant students who seek to meet minimum standards on the way to a diploma. They contend that disengagement does not include two other groups: 1) those internally motivated to learn and 2) students who are motivated fundamentally by extrinsic rewards such as the diploma, gradepoint average, class ranking and letters of recommendation. They suggest that "perhaps two thirds of those intending to enroll in institutions of higher education do not have to concentrate on challenging academic coursework to be admitted" (Sedlak et al., 1986, p. 10). And they continue that students typically "reject the basic academic subjects, particularly advanced classes in science, mathematics, social studies, foreign languages and composition" (Sedlak et al., 1986, p. 44).

Although they recognize that there exists no golden age of academic rigor in the contemporary American high school, they contend that traditional ideological and economic incentives for academic engagement have eroded as students realize the devaluation of their diploma as a credential for upward mobility.

Likewise, they suggest that teachers may reconcile immediate interactional concerns and long-term academic objectives, by focusing on managing the former and deemphasizing the latter. They point out the prevalence of pressure on teachers to pass all students along regardless of their academic performance, thus avoiding confrontation and mastery simultaneously. In addition, the authors note that teachers may devote less time to teaching due to 1) the high number of students in their classes, 2) the number of other school commitments, 3) collective bargaining agreements, and 4) the development of careers

outside of the classroom that bring additional income and more prestige than teaching.

It is hoped, then, that this study placed in historical perspective and linked to its more recent pilot study, will not only draw from the body of literature on which it rests, but will, indeed, add to that body of work. This research seeks to stand back and take stock of what was happening in one high school foreign language classroom. In the tradition of classroom-centered qualitative research, the findings, conclusions and implications of this study are related to larger theoretical issues in the field of education. It is hoped that relating the findings of this study to those discussed in this literature review will further the development of formal grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) by drawing relationships between substantive analyses in a variety of sites, not only in the field of foreign language, but, indeed, throughout the organization of schooling. The focus of this study is on the relationship between foreign language curriculum/instruction and the often invisible, but extremely powerful high school/classroom culture. It explores some of the limits and possibilities for language acquisition in the high school classroom context, and, thus, enhances the possible development and further exploration of implications that these constraints and opportunities may have, in general, for teacher educators.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

This chapter has three main foci. The first deals with the study's research questions and how they evolved. The second deals with the methodological approach used in data collection and analysis. The final section includes a note on stylistic conventions used in the text.

Research Questions

The topic of this study deals with perceptions of "success" in foreign language teaching/learning in the formal classroom setting. The primary question addressed is, How are perceptions of success in foreign language teaching/learning formed and manifested by participants in a high school classroom setting? As previously mentioned, the pilot study from which this research stems led me to expect that participants, including teachers, students, administrators and parents may express different and sometimes contradictory definitions for what they consider the study of foreign language to be, and may, therefore, employ different and sometimes mutually exclusive measures for successful accomplishment of such study.

Four subsidiary guiding questions were particularly useful in helping me to begin my initial observations in the field. The first question required me to focus on curriculum. To what extent do the

explicit curriculum and textbook material used or recommended for the class serve as determinants of success? Are participants aware of such influence and/or the extent of the influence? Such a question encouraged me to examine the possibility that there may be a standardization of content and philosophy and/or standardized competencies used as measures for success within this class or within the foreign language department. In addition it helped me to focus on participant satisfaction with the materials or methods being used particularly in this class, but also within the department.

The second initial question dealt with time. To what extent is time a conscious or unconscious factor in the determination of success? How might this differ among participants? I was interested in determining if there was an explicit or implicit time "cap" for the study for foreign language, and if this time frame was influenced by requirements established by the high school, institutions of higher learning or the community. In addition, I was very interested in how participants used time in the classroom. What or who was deemed important enough to spend time on?

The third question forced me to view the participants as part of a larger picture. To what extent does the school culture affect participants' definitions of success in this class? I was interested in determining the ways in which this foreign language class was similar or different from other learning experiences in which participants were involved. In addition I wanted to see if or how the overall school culture either explicitly or implicitly affected standards of behavior and/or achievement in this classroom.

And finally I wanted to observe the participants as individuals. To what extent do individual participant's characteristics affect their definition of success? I wanted to see if prior learning/teaching experiences affected preconceptions of success and to what extent family members, friends or counselors influence the participants' perceptions of success in foreign language learning.

Although I continued to address these initial questions throughout the study, I found that my questions evolved in response to the setting. In describing qualitative methods of research, Erickson (1986) encourages reconstruction of research questions in the field setting, "in response to changes in the fieldworker's perceptions and understandings of events and their organization" (Erickson, 1986, p. 9).

After I had been in the classroom for a period of time I found that the nature of my questions both broadened and narrowed as they began to stem from the setting, rather than from my pre-conceived notion of what the setting might reveal.

On one hand, my questions broadened. I simply sought to know how participants made sense of the interactions in this classroom. Their frequently-used word, "trying," began to be significant, in that I wanted to know what participants were trying to do. How were participants "trying to succeed" in this foreign language classroom?

And, in the opposite sense, my questions narrowed somewhat. With increased knowledge of the teacher's background, I was able to focus my observations on the possible carry-over effects of her experience and training in communicative teaching methods at the college level. I asked, In what ways might this classroom context enhance or inhibit the

functional (as opposed to formal) approach to foreign language teaching? Do participants view this approach as important, desirable and/or workable?

At least to some extent, I was able to address and answer each of my research questions as they related to the overarching amended primary concerns--How were participants "trying to succeed" in this classroom, and how did the organizational culture of the school and classroom enhance or inhibit their pursuits?

Research Plan

Given the qualitative nature of the research questions, and the depth of understanding that was necessary to comprehend the context of the learning environment, I chose a fieldwork approach as the most appropriate method to gain the insights I sought. Interpretive participant observation (Erickson, 1986) was used to gather data. Throughout the second semester of the 1986-7 school year, I engaged in extensive observation of an urban public high school beginning level Spanish classroom, spending approximately four of the five class periods per week observing daily activities and recording them in fieldnotes. I did not participate in any of the academic or managerial activities of the classroom, but rather attended class regularly and wrote copious notes. As might be expected, my presence was a bit awkward at first, but as participants tested and felt comfortable that what I saw or heard remained confidential and was not treated judgmentally, I came to be accepted in a fashion similar to that of an independent study student--one whose interests are similar to theirs,

but whose activities are of different design and, generally, non-threatening. During the eighteen-week semester, I attended 70 fifty-five minute class sessions.

My observation was focused on the teacher, the students and their interactions within the classroom and school contexts. On one occasion I accompanied the teacher and another department member with their classes on a fieldtrip to a local Mexican-American restaurant. During periods of participant observation I took extensive fieldnotes that, in the end, comprised a total of approximately 670 pages. In addition, I collected documents that included class handouts, samples of student work, exams, district policy and curriculum publications that were pertinent to the context of this classroom.

In addition to frequent informal chats with the teacher and the students, open-ended interviews were held with a variety of participants. In-depth interviews with the teacher were held on three occasions--in February, April and June. The last two of these interviews were audiotaped and transcribed. Beginning in March, I met with and interviewed 19 of the 23 students. Voluntarily, the students met with me individually or in small groups for a total of eight separate sessions and approximately 140 pages of transcribed audiotaped notes. I interviewed five parents by telephone, speaking to one parent both at the beginning and end of the term. I had a lengthy interview with the head counselor and a brief question period with the principal. The assistant principal and the district's information services director provided statistical and demographic data.

For the most part, interviews with the teacher and students took place during the lunch time. In all cases, I had a few general questions prepared that asked participants to interpret observations I was making in the classroom setting, to clarify their motivations, or to add their perceptions of how this class was like and unlike others with which they were involved. During the last class session, I asked students to complete a short written survey (Appendix A) prepared from information they had given me during various interview sessions. Students were asked to check statements that they felt applied to them.

In summary, then, the interpretive participant observation method was used to gather data for this study. Techniques used included: a) classroom observation with fieldnote records, b) interviews (many audiotaped), c) compilation of pertinent documents, and d) a short written survey.

Analysis

As is common in qualitative research, the analysis of data for this study was done inductively, following Glaser and Strauss' (1967) grounded theory model in which theoretical assertions emerge from the particulars of the setting. The analysis of the data falls into the actual process of the research design, and as Hammersley and Atkinson (1983, p. 174) suggest, "theory building and data collection are dialectically linked."

The process of systematically analyzing the data began shortly after my entry into the setting, and continued throughout the study. Fieldnotes were re-written each day and were divided into three

sections per page (Appendix B). Objective observations were recorded in the center of each page including time notations and careful punctuation of direct quotes. Separated and to one side of this information, I recorded my personal reactions, inferences and hunches about patterns that appeared to be developing. Separated to the other side of the observations were questions I wanted to ask individual participants or notes to myself to seek further information that might confirm or disconfirm tentative assertions I was developing.

At intervals of several weeks, I reviewed all of my data and wrote analytic fieldnote memos (Bogdan & Biklen, 1982) that allowed me to reflect on issues raised in the setting and on how my observations appeared to be relating to larger theoretical, methodological and substantive issues. These memos allowed me to take stock of the data I was gathering, and to continually refine and focus my inquiries.

This ongoing process allowed me to look for classes of things, persons and events that formed key linkages between the phenomena occurring in the classroom (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973). Continual cross-checking with the participants enhanced construct validity by identifying and clarifying meaning in context. In addition, each analytic memo was discussed with my research advisors. Their perspectives on the theoretical issues encouraged me to further clarify the guiding constructs, to clearly relate my work to the existing literature, and to focus more precisely on the emerging key linkages.

The data obtained from the different methodological processes were compared and contrasted using a technique known as "triangulation" (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1983). Through this process I was able to

compare data relating to the same phenomenon that derived from different phases of the fieldwork, occurred at different points in time, or originated with the words or actions of various participants. In this manner, I monitored construct validity by examining data relating to the same construct that was gathered through each of the techniques. Often, for example, interview data supported or disconfirmed tentative assertions that emerged in my fieldnote analysis. For example, one student enthusiastically told me in an interview session of her interest and dedication to learning Spanish. In class, however, fieldnotes show that her efforts were more often engaged in note writing and chatting with her friends. Likewise documents were cross-checked with fieldnotes and interview notes. Two students whom I had suspected of cheating, for example, produced test papers that were identical. These documents were helpful in confirming my suspicions. And toward the end of the data gathering phase, the short written survey information was cross-checked with fieldnote and interview data, adding yet another perspective to previously-examined information.

Once the key linkages were set and the theoretical constructs were researched, the final layer of data analysis was undertaken. The data were sifted time and again, and coded file cards were prepared that listed cross-referenced examples of recurring patterns and support for assertions as well as disconfirming evidence. Examples chosen for the final report of the findings were those that were most representative of a fit between what was recorded in the data and my sense of what occurred in the setting.

Stylistic Conventions

As has been discussed, interpretive participant observational research was used in this research project in order to study one teacher and her class in a close and personal manner. In order to protect the anonymity of those involved, the names of the teacher, the students, the parents and support personnel as well as that of the school and the school district have been changed to protect their privacy. I have used pseudonyms throughout the paper to enhance the readability.

In the report of the findings I have used quotations marks (" ") in the text to indicate the exact words of the speakers. Long quotations from interview transcripts or fieldnotes have been indented and single spaced, and the words of the speaker appear beside his or her name. Parentheses ( ) enclose comments, contextual information, non-verbal activity, etc. Brackets [ ] surround additional words that add context to a direct quotation. Slashes / / enclose English translations of Spanish utterances.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE SCHOOL CULTURE AND THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM

Introduction to the Setting and the Participants

The School

The setting for this study is the John F. Kennedy Memorial High School. It is a midwestern urban high school of 2,067 students and 93 staff members. The building itself is a sprawling, three-story brick structure built during the period when fine hardwood and hand-painted tiles adorned showcase public buildings. Memorial is one of three high schools of similar size within the district.

Hanging prominently in the spacious commons area is a huge sign. It boldly states, "Welcome to John F. Kennedy Memorial High School, Home of the Fighting Tigers." Under a characterization of a formidable-looking beast is the slogan "A School That Cares About Learning."

Because the boundaries within the district are now totally contiguous, there is a wide variety in socioeconomic status and racial-ethnic mix of the student body at Memorial. Some students arrive at school from households receiving public assistance. Others come from middle to upper income situations. According to the district's director of information services, approximately 49% of the student body

is white, 8% Hispanic, 3% Asian, 39% Black and one 1% American Indian. The population has remained relatively stable over the last five years.

The school day is divided into seven periods of 55 minutes each. A 15 minute administrative time precedes first hour so that the day begins at 7:45 A.M. and finishes at 2:55 P.M. In an effort to receive state aid, the district generally requires freshmen and sophomores to attend six classes per day and eat lunch during third, fourth or fifth period noon hours. Upperclassmen eat during one of the same three periods, but have an option to forego the seventh hour and finish their day at 1:55.

The table of contents in the Curriculum Guide lists Foreign Language as one of 17 departments in which courses are offered. Memorial is a comprehensive high school, and students enrolled may take advantage of the in-school offerings as well as those offered at the district's Academic Interest Center, and opportunities in vocational education and community involvement. Representatives both in the district's central office and in Memorial's counseling department estimate that approximately half of the students could be categorized as college-bound. For the 1985-6 school year there was a 6% dropout rate at Memorial.

Four languages, Latin, German, Spanish and French, are offered at Memorial. One student travels across town to study Russian at another district high school. Table 1 details the courses and number of sections for each language.

There are six staff members in the language department--two are full-time, and four are part-time. The majority of these part time

		86/87	87/88
LATIN	1st Year	1 Section	Same as 86/87
LATIN	2nd & 3rd Year	1 Section (Combined)	Same as 86/87
GERMAN	1st Year	1 Section	Same as 86/87
GERMAN	2nd & 3rd Year	1 Section (Combined)	Same as 86/87
SPANISH	1st Year	4 Sections	5 Sections
SPANISH	2nd Year	2 Sections	Same as 86/87
SPANISH	3rd & 4th Year	1 Section (Combined)	Same as 86/87
FRENCH	1st Year	4 Sections	Same as 86/87
FRENCH	2nd Year	3 Sections	2 Sections
FRENCH	3rd & 4th Year	1 Section (Combined)	2 Sections
*RUSSIAN	Taught at [redacted] for 86/87	One (1) Student Only	
		86/87 TOTAL = 19 Sections	87/88 TOTAL = 20 Sections

Table 1. Foreign Language Enrollment Data

staff members share assignments in other departments or in other schools. Two of the staff members are male and four are female. According to the assistant principal, "Class sizes are a maximum of thirty-three (33) for all foreign language. The upper level combination classes usually third and fourth year students generally total 9-15 students. Second semester first year students drop the language at a rate of ten (10) to fifteen (15) percent, not significant enough to lose sections on the schedule, however."

The language courses at Memorial, like the vast majority of all courses, are one semester in length. There is no pre-requisite. The course description for Spanish I & II in the curriculum guide states:

> Designed for students who desire to speak, read and write the Spanish language. Students will be prepared for Spanish college level. Uses of the Spanish grammar is stressed. Students will participate in different cultural activities. May be taken as an elective in the college pre-program.

The textbook adopted by the district is Nuestros Amigos, copyrighted in 1979 by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc. Apparently, there is no written designation for the number of chapters to be covered, but the two Spanish teachers informally agreed to teach between eight and ten units per semester. They both began Spanish II at Unit Nine.

The classroom setting for this study was located in an annex to the main building, and was occupied by another teacher for the majority of the day. It is this mathematics teacher who decorated the classroom with laminated posters and kept the bulletin boards at the front of the room up-to-date and colorful. The desks were arranged traditionally in rows, and the room looked much as pictured in the map (see Figure 1).

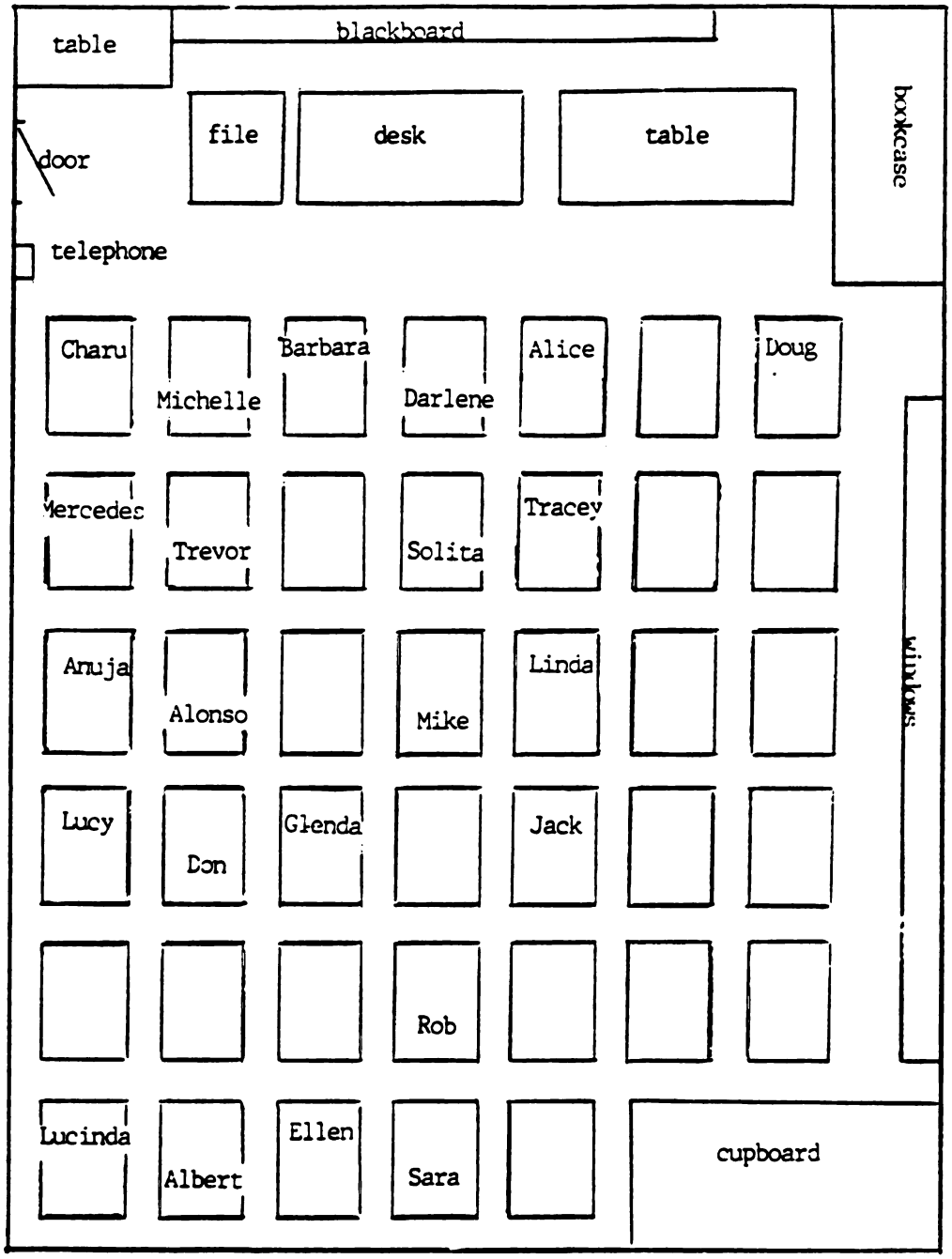


Figure 1. Map of the Classroom.

One bookcase was set aside for use by the teacher in this study. It was here she stored materials needed by the sixth and seventh hour Spanish classes she taught.

As was characteristic of each of the classrooms in the district, a telephone connected the inhabitants to the network of offices within the building, and rang whenever there was a need to convey messages. Likewise, it was used by staff to contact the office for information or for security purposes. In similar fashion, the public address system periodically relayed announcements from the central office. According to the Student Handbook, announcements were given twice a day--once in the fifteen minute morning administrative period, and again at the beginning of the sixth hour.

The Teacher

Maria Kraft is a first-year teacher at Memorial. Of Hispanic-American heritage, she "wore three hats" in the organization. One half of her assignment was as a member of the seven-person counseling staff. The six other counselors divided their caseloads on an alphabetical basis. Mrs. Kraft was simply called the Bilingual Counselor.

In addition, Mrs. Kraft was assigned to teach three classes. During the morning she taught one section of English as a Second Language, and her sixth and seventh hours were Spanish II assignments.

Several years ago when she was already in her mid-life, Maria Kraft decided to expand on her work as a librarian in the district and she returned to the university to be certified as a teacher of Spanish and Bilingual Education. As part of her Master's Program, she studied and

served for a year as a teaching assistant in a Spanish department that highly valued a communicative approach to language teaching. She completed her student teaching in a suburban district, receiving a positively glowing recommendation from her cooperating teacher. In the fall of 1986, at least two districts offered her teaching positions. She chose the position at Memorial.

Having spent most of her life in the United States, Maria speaks completely fluent, idiomatic English. She has a slight accent that is most noticeable in vowel pronunciations, certain word endings and the typically-Spanish tendency to add a vowel prefix to words beginning with the letter s followed by a consonant, such as "espanish."

Mrs. Kraft and her family lived for years within this school district, and her sons attended Memorial High School, so her perspective on the culture of the school included that of a parent as well as staff member. She now lives in a nearby community, and, in addition to her personal and professional interests, takes an active part in Hispanic affairs.

First year, non-tenured teachers are generally considered to be enthusiastic in their contributions to their new school culture, and Maria Kraft was no exception. Her school day was more than full. In addition to becoming accustomed to her roles in both the counseling office and in the classroom, she served on the district-wide textbook selection committee, and volunteered to spend considerable time and effort in organizing and advising the Spanish Club at Memorial. In trying to juggle her schedule with those of her students, she very often ate a quick snack at her desk, working through her lunch hour.

In addition, she worked long hours after school and attended at least one conference that was held on the weekend. In early April she was asked by the district to travel to a large metropolitan school district to serve on a certification evaluation team.

In all of the hours I observed her, I never heard her say no to a request for assistance, nor did I ever hear her speak to anyone--student, staff member or parent--without the utmost respect for their needs and their feelings.

For example, although she already had an overload of 35 and 38 students in her two Spanish I sections fall term, Mrs. Kraft agreed to take on a senior, Doug Ellsworth, as an independent study student for sixth hour. Doug was considered one of the most promising students at Memorial. When he was in the sixth grade, Doug lived in Madrid, Spain, while his father, a geneticist, did research. Doug returned to Memorial and apparently found that his first year of Spanish with Mr. MacNamara did not meet his needs. Mrs. Kraft agreed to provide him with a grammar review experience that would prepare him for the ivy league schools to which he was applying.

But it was not just for honors students that Mrs. Kraft agreed to stretch her concern. When Lucinda Perez, one of her counselees, confided fall term that she was pregnant, Mrs. Kraft arranged for Lucinda, also, to continue her Spanish as an independent study student during sixth hour.

And, in addition to her first year responsibilities at Memorial, Maria Kraft completed her last evening course in English as a Second

Language, and earned her Masters Degree in Spanish and ESL in March of 1987.

The Students

Although the literature on foreign language classrooms is scarce, there seems to be a surface stereotype of language classes populated by a rather homogeneous group of motivated, academically-able and predominately college-bound students (Goodlad, 1984, p. 217). The young people in this classroom, however, could best be characterized by their diversity.

On the surface, the racial/ethnic proportions in this class only partially mirrored that of the diverse overall school population described earlier. The high school had 49% white students, this class had 43%; the school had 8% Hispanics, this class 26%; the school had 3% Asians, this class 9%; the school had 39% Blacks, this class 22%.

Unlike most academic high school classes, these students were not divided by age, nor according to academic program. Seated side by side were seven freshmen, four sophomores, five juniors and seven seniors. Not unexpectedly, then, the schedules of class members revealed that although they shared a common learning experience for this hour, the kinds of classes they attended for the other five or six hours of the school day varied greatly. One girl, for example, spent her mornings at the district's vocational center in a child care program. In contrast, a boy on the other side of the room arrived at Spanish class from advanced placement academic offerings in English and physics. One tenth grader studied geometry in the morning while his age-mate's math

class was in pre-algebra. One senior described her high school career as generally unmotivated and characterized by skipping school with her friends. She went on to describe her sophomore brother, who sat next to her in Spanish class, as "always bringing home good grades."

The backgrounds that the students had in previous language study or use were also diverse. Three students (including one independent study pupil) heard and spoke Spanish at home on a daily basis. One student apparently heard a great deal of Spanish at home, but used it very little himself, and was offended by his previous placement in bilingual classes. Two students reported that they had grandparents and other relatives who spoke Spanish.

At least six students mentioned that they had studied Spanish at the junior high school level, and one young man said he had had a year of high school French prior to this language experience.

Even the learning experience that immediately preceded this semester was not the same for all participants. As previously mentioned, this class was entitled Spanish II, and was designed as a semester-long follow up to the one semester offering of Spanish I. More than half of the students studied with Mrs. Kraft first semester, but six students entered from Mr. MacNamara's Spanish I section. As will be discussed in more detail later, there was a marked difference in the normative and transactive patterns between these two sections. In addition, two students entered from introductory Spanish classes outside of this high school.

Finally, it must be noted once again that two students in this class were enrolled as independent study learners, each at a different

level of achievement and each with a different high school history that brought them to this class as independent students.

Naturally, any classroom is characterized by the diversity of its participants, but there seem to be in this setting at least two unique characteristics. First, and rather significant, is the observation that the task of learning/teaching introductory high school Spanish was a new undertaking for everyone in this classroom. Second, although the Curriculum Guide emphasized that Spanish I and II would prepare students for the college level, the combination of students enrolled in this section was not characteristic of the more homogeneously-grouped, academically-oriented pre-college track classes. With the wide variety of ages and abilities, the students gathered in this class more resembled a gym or art class combination. It is with these two characteristics of the setting and its participants in mind that the description and interpretation of the findings of this study will be considered.

Student Needs and Motivations

It appears that there were diverse reasons for why students enrolled in this class. There was no question, however, that they all wanted to GET something. Some wanted to GET INTO college, others wanted to GET OUT of high school. Overlapping these categories was a group who apparently wanted to GET ALONG better with family members by continuing the language of their heritage. Some students fell into at least two of the groups, but found one goal to be most personally pressing. Underlying these motivations were profound implications

about what students hoped to TAKE OUT of their Spanish class in terms of personally valuable or applicable language skills in Spanish. The kinds and amount of effort (or resistance) that students PUT INTO Spanish class, then, was in a very real sense, related to what they hoped to GET OUT or TAKE OUT with them.

It is interesting to note that these underlying motivations not only had an impact on why students chose to study foreign language, but, indeed, on why they chose Spanish from among the five languages offered at this high school.

Getting into College

The impact that college curriculum and entrance requirements have on high school curriculum cannot be underestimated. In the area of foreign language the requirements have vacillated sharply over the years, and high schools have reacted in concert. Although participants in this study had a difficult time describing the place of foreign language in the college preparatory program of studies, it was clear that they felt the pressure from colleges to include it. There was among administrators, counselors, parents and students a strong understanding that if colleges did not explicitly require a foreign language, it was considered to be "strongly desirable."

Dr. Westinghouse, the principal at Memorial High, mentioned during a short interview that "We are trying to improve foreign language instruction in the building," and continued, "We realize that foreign language is coming back as a highly desirable course and discipline for colleges and universities." One of his assistant principals,

Mr. Mack, compiled figures (see Table 1) that showed the increasing popularity of foreign language courses at Memorial, highlighting the fact that the language department had grown by about five sections over the last three years. Mack added, "This is, in my opinion, the result of the shift back on the part of colleges and universities to requiring a foreign language for entrance."

Mr. Dale, the twenty-four year veteran head counselor at Memorial, said in a rather lengthy interview that he had watched the ebb and flow of foreign language popularity over the years. When I asked him why he felt students enrolled in a foreign language course he replied, "That puzzled me initially until several years ago. All of a sudden foreign language absolutely blossomed." He continued that enrollments were so sparse at one point that foreign languages were mainly offered out of the district's Academic Learning Center in order to draw from all of the area high schools and sustain some enrollment. He went on, "I'm really not totally sure what began to instill in students the interest in foreign language. It just mushroomed." Saying that it was obvious to him that "we build schedules around student interest in class offerings," Dale surmised that parents may be influenced by increased press attention relating foreign language to the thrust toward college. They might also be influenced by increased travel or "the feeling the world is shrinking," he mused.

The message that colleges want to see foreign language on students' transcripts emanated clearly from the counseling office. Multiple copies of a colorful poster, distributed in cooperation with directors of admission for the state's colleges and universities, hung

prominently not only in the large outer office, but in the counselors' individual offices. With a picture of a partially eaten apple and the slogan, "Every Apple Needs a Good Core," two years of foreign language were listed with recommendations for four years of English and math, three years of science and social studies, two years of fine arts and one year of computer skills.

And apparently, counselors told their charges that foreign language credit was a good idea. Part of an interview with Charu Kachru revealed:

Me: The reason you took Spanish is--

Charu: Oh, 'cause my counselor told me that, uh, it'd be good if I took it for a year.

Me: To take it for a year for...?

Charu: Uh, in case I wanted to get into some college and it required a foreign language, ya know.

As Mr. Dale suggested, it appeared to be the parents of some of the students in this study who guided their youngsters to enroll in foreign language for college entry purposes. When I asked Michael's mother, Mrs. Conwell, if she or her husband had influenced Mike's choice to study foreign language, she responded immediately, "We did. We insisted that he take a foreign language for college entrance, and just to have it."

On the other hand, there were parents who seemed to have a clear understanding of the bureaucratic necessity of foreign language study to facilitate college entry, but were not as convinced of its value. Mrs. Glouster, the parent of Trevor, who struggled in Spanish, said

that she and her husband had influenced Trevor to enroll, "only because he wants to go to college," and that counselors had said it was necessary. When Trevor registered as a freshman, "They really pressured him to take it. He already had one year, [in middle school] they said, and needed another one for college." She revealed that she told Trevor that "he might as well take it" although he "didn't want it, and didn't enjoy it."

Charu's mother, a native of West India, was hesitant, at first, to allow Charu and her sister, Anuja, to participate in this research project. When I spoke to her by phone, she expressed her understanding that Spanish was required of her girls, and her concern that her daughters were under pressure to keep too many languages going. Already bilingual, the girls spoke Gujarati, an Indian language, at home, and then had to use English at school. I had the distinct impression that Mrs. Kachru was suspicious of a system that required the study of a foreign language for college entry, but appeared to specify that their foreign language wouldn't qualify--even at the mastery level. However, she considered my interest in the study of that system, and consented to allow her daughters to participate in the research.

In all, interview and survey data would indicate that more than half of the 23 students enrolled in Mrs. Kraft's sixth hour Spanish class considered college entry requirements the strongest motivating factor for their enrollment.

Getting out of High School

In addition to its place as part of the college preparatory program, foreign language was also listed as a course that could be chosen to fulfill the two-credit humanities requirement for graduation from John F. Kennedy Memorial High School.

Dr. Westinghouse eloquently defended foreign language as "a valuable curriculum offering "whether you're going to college or not." He continued, "From a humanities [viewpoint] it helps develop a much more rounded individual. We are a comprehensive high school, and I think students should look at it as they build their four year programs."

Mr. Dale, who expressed frustration at the short amount of time counselors have with students in actually developing a meaningful four year plan, said that, in effect, some students simply look over the list of electives that could meet the humanities requirement and say, "I don't want art, music, speech or drama, so I think I'll take foreign language."

Indeed, students also expressed the need to fill up their schedule and satisfy graduation requirements. Jack Damone, a senior, talked of going to college someday--either the local community college or to a large Big Ten university. But his reasons for enrolling in Spanish were more immediate:

Me: So, why did you take Spanish?

Jack: Well, I need it to graduate for one thing. I didn't realize it until this year. My counselor didn't help me out too much, but I found out I needed it so I took Spanish.

Likewise, Michelle Kwitkowski echoed expediency:

Me: Now, you're a senior already, why did you choose--

Michelle: Uh, well, for one, I had to fill up my schedule...

Alonso Cervantes, an Hispanic freshman, told a different version of the scheduling story. When I spoke with him the third week of class he expressed a feeling that the choice to be in this class was not essentially his. He said that he was "put" into Spanish in the junior high school. He figured that it was because he already spoke the language at home. He reiterated in an interview at the end of the term, "It's just I had it in junior high and then from there its just given to me and [they] kept on giving it to me." He added, "They say if you get a good grade in it, you might as well keep it."

Getting on with Family Traditions

Another motivation that prodded Hispanic students to enroll in Spanish was a need to better understand and continue their cultural heritage through the study and mastery of the language. Family members and counsellors encouraged them in this endeavor.

In an interview with Mrs. Kraft on April 21 she spoke of her role as a bilingual counselor. She said, "I recommend all the Hispanic students to take Spanish, because, after all, it is their heritage and their ethnic background, and why shouldn't they know that language?"

Parents, likewise, encouraged their children to learn their family's traditional language. Albert Perez quietly told me before class one day that he enrolled in Spanish because, "My mom told me to

take it, then if I go to Mexico or somewhere I'll know it more." In a longer telephone interview with Albert's sister, Lucinda, at the end of the term, she explained why their parents had encouraged Albert to enroll in Spanish, and were even more insistent that their younger brother, an incoming freshman, study the language. "They don't speak it as much as I do," she said. She gave an example of instances when Spanish-speaking, Mexican-American friends of her parents call on the telephone. Lucinda says she feels quite comfortable communicating with them. She said Albert is "bothered" by it, but will speak and take messages if necessary. "If my little brother was by himself," she continued, "he'd hang up!" Lucinda felt her parents recognized that the children's Spanish skills were disappearing, and were anxious that their sons, particularly, regain and develop new skills. Lucinda, herself, said she continued to pursue Spanish because, although she virtually spoke no English when she entered school through Project Headstart, she felt her Spanish just "wore off" over the years.

Why Did These Students Choose Spanish as Their Foreign Language?

Although it is rather apparent why Hispanic students such as Albert and Lucinda are encouraged by their parents and bilingual counselors to continue the study of their cultural heritage, the choice of Spanish by other students appears to be prompted by at least two other motivations. First, some of the students felt that Spanish was the easiest foreign language to learn. And second, some students felt that a knowledge of Spanish might be a practical asset in the future.

Spanish as the Easiest Foreign Language

The idea that Spanish was the easiest language appeared to arise from a variety of sources including parents, counselors and a network of impressions passed among students within the school culture. An interview with Don revealed the opinions that parents pass on to students as they enroll for foreign language:

Me: How come you're in Spanish? Is there any reason you're there?

Don: Well, my parents wanted me to take a language.

Me: Did they say Spanish?

Don: Yea. 'Cause my mom said that's probably the easiest language to learn.(laugh)

Mrs. Kraft herself believed that Spanish was the easiest of the languages to learn and she passed this belief on to her counselees. In an interview in late April we discussed some of the students' perceptions of Spanish as a required versus elective class:

Mrs.K: Well, they, see, maybe they don't have it clear enough that what they need is any language.

Me: Yea, Well they, they--

Mrs.K: It's probably what the counselors have told them. That they need a language--

Me: Yea--

Mrs.K: --and then, of course, Spanish is, is the easiest language in my opinion.

Me: Is it? Now, do you tell kids that sometimes? 'Cause a lot of them have told me that--that Spanish is the easiest.

Mrs.K: I tell them that it's easiest, and I tell them that in the United States they will have more opportunities to use it.

Mike shared impressions he had gathered through the school culture:

Me: And Mike. How about you? Why are you taking Spanish?

Mike: I heard it was the easiest language. (laugh)

Me: You heard it was the easiest language? You know, I've heard that a lot. Is it?

Mike: Well, it's---

Me: Why did you hear it's the easiest language?

Mike: Because of Mr. Mac. (laugh)

Me: Because of Mr. Mac. So is that the easiest language or the easiest teacher we're talking?

Jack: (joining the conversation)--The easiest teacher.

Mike: Yea, the easiest teacher, plus I kinda thought it'd be the easiest language, ya, know, 'cause you don't hear at all German. You don't hear French or any of that around, but you hear, like, you know, I bet everybody, probably everybody in the school, could probably count up to ten in Spanish. You know, I mean just stuff like that... It might be a little bit more familiar.

Familiarity and ease strangely coincided in Anuja Kachru's conclusion that Spanish was close to Gujarati, and therefore she should join her sister in enrolling for Spanish.

Me: I'm just kind of curious about why someone--you are already bilingual, right? I mean you speak another language at home. Why is it that you need to take another foreign language, then?

Anuja: (Having already told me that she took Spanish because she "was interested and for college too.")--Ooh, This--There is--I would have took my language, but you

know, they don't have our kind of language in here so we had to, I had to get a, um, different language and Spanish is the closest, you know. I thought it'd be easier to get, but I still get confused on things.

Doug Ellsworth, a senior honors student, discussed the often unspoken reputation that Spanish had developed at Memorial. He seemed to indicate that Spanish is not only considered easier, but, in general, has a lower status as an academic pursuit.

Doug: Well, I think it also depends on which language. I think that French in this school has a higher reputation.

Alonso: Yep.

Doug: (continuing) It's more firmly entrenched and the teacher has a very good reputation. Mrs. L-- and that tends to attract more college-bound students, where Spanish, I think a lot of kids see that as any easy grade. I don't know why (laugh)...

Doug added that "Spanish also has the aura around it of not being such a high language as French." Although I waited, he did not elaborate.

Mr. Dale, the counselor, likewise, expressed the feeling that Spanish was the language chosen by students of lesser ability. I asked if he sensed that some languages held different status among students/counselors.

Mr.D.: I'm not aware of any. As I think about it, those with lesser abilities may more often be looking at Spanish."

He continued that French may rank second--and not German or Latin.

Spanish as a Practical Language

There seemed to be, then, an interesting combination of concern for both ease and practicality in the choice of Spanish as a foreign language to pursue. At least three attitudes seemed to prevail. In the first, the emphasis was on the practical application of language skills that might be acquired in this course. The attitude was, more or less, "I will study it because it is practical and I can see a use for it in my future." In addition to all of the Hispanic students who, to one extent or another, projected a use of Spanish with their relatives, three students expressed a relatively strong belief that they would use their skills. Linda Ainsworth, an exuberant freshman, said:

> Linda: I need it because what I want. I wanna be a child psychologist. I want to be in, like, L.A. or New York and then it would be neat because you could do, like, bilingual if you knew how to speak really well.

Michelle Kwitkowski not only filled up her schedule with Spanish, but added:

> Michelle: ...I think it helped you in, ya know, jobs.
>
> Me: How so?
>
> Michelle: I worked at [our] medical center. Sometimes they have Spanish patients and stuff like that, ya know, and I think it'd be a lot easier to talk to 'em like that than if I can't understand them a little bit.

Glenda Dizon, another freshman, told me that she wanted to be a lawyer and that she fully expected that she would use her Spanish with Hispanic clients someday.

The second group of students was also aware that Spanish was considered a practical language, but seemed unsure of how they might use their skills. Their attitude was couched in concerns for credentialing, and seemed to say, "I know that Spanish is practical, and if I learn any of it, I just might be able to use it someday."

It was obvious, for example, that Mercedes Martinez had heard the message that Spanish could be practically applied. Her major interest, however, was on the credentialing effort:

Mercedes: Well, I went to [the university] once with Mrs. Kraft, with, ah, all of her Spanish kids, and it had to do with, ah, engineering. They say they need a lotta Spanish engineers because, ah, a lotta people, er, um, businesses are, like, in South America, Latin America, and, and, Spain and all those Spanish places because of the people that work for lower wages there. Labor and stuff.

Me: So they would need engineers, then-

Mercedes: --that can speak English and Spanish-stuff like that.

Me: So is that why you're taking Spanish, then?

Mercedes: No. (laugh)

Me: Why are you taking Spanish, then, Mercedes?

Mercedes: 'Cause, so I can get into college.

A little less sure of his intentions or abilities, Jack said he took Spanish "'cause if I <u>do</u> learn any of it, it will be helpful 'cause in this--in America, at least, Spanish is kinda like a second language."

A third group of students saw Spanish solely as the path of least resistance to college entrance or high school graduation. They seemed to say, "I'm taking it because I think it is the easiest way to fulfill

a requirement and I foresee little or no practical application to my own life." At least two students echoed this perspective:

Trevor: I don't really know and, like, Spanish, I mean I have no intentions of goin' to any Mexican country. I mean I might but--I dunno--I just...

and

Don: I could probly, ya know, do good in this class, like know more, if I want to, but I don't know (laugh).

Me: You don't seem to want to...

Don: Not really. I don't think I'm ever gonna use it, I mean. I don't know. I'll probly use it in college a little.

There is not much doubt that although all the students in this study were well aware that they needed to be in a language class to GET something that led to a credential, they were somewhat less clear in expressing in words or actions a firm belief that they would TAKE with them any personally practical skills or attitudes through the study of foreign language, in general, or, specifically, through the study of Spanish.

Teacher Needs and Motivations

With the expressed underlying motivations of the students in mind, it is important to turn to the needs and priorities of Mrs. Kraft, the first year teacher, considering her place both within the organization and her role in the development of her classroom culture and climate.

Clarifying Organizational Roles

As a new teacher, and one interested in continuing full-time employment as a teacher/counselor in the district, Maria Kraft needed to clarify issues of role, expectations, values and territory in order to become an effective contributor to the organization. Interview data reveal that her main role within the school culture was that of Bilingual Counselor. As a part time Spanish teacher, however, there were also distinct expectations.

Dr. Westinghouse revealed in an interview:

> We are attempting to improve foreign language instruction in the building and improve that in terms of number--number of offerings--opportunity students have to select foreign language and seek to find ways to help teachers feel they are doing a better job in attracting students to foreign language and try to support them as much as we can in their classroom instruction.

Later in the same interview, Dr. Westinghouse discussed the difficulty of scheduling foreign language classes and teachers, but concluded that despite these problems, "On the whole, the numbers of enrollment and so forth held."

It seemed obvious, then, that success in this department was measured, at least administratively, by numbers, and that if Mrs. Kraft wanted to be successful, she would need to help in the effort to attract students to foreign language courses and to do her part to make these classes valuable and/or attractive enough to keep enrollments up.

Maria Kraft was also aware of her need to consider territorial concerns, as they affected her role. Her specific assignment was referred to on several occasions as the "overload." As foreign

language enrollments were already on the upswing, particularly for the first two years, Mrs. Kraft was needed to teach at the introductory level. "Overload" in this building was something of a touchy subject. This was a contract year for teachers and one of the contract issues was class size and accompanying overload concerns. In fact, so delicate was this issue that Dr. Westinghouse flatly refused to discuss enrollment of independent study students in our brief interview calling it "controversial" and a "contractual question." In reality, Mrs. Kraft was assigned two overloaded classes first semester: sixth hour overloaded by two students, seventh hour by five--this on a base of a maximum classload of 33 students. Although her contract provided that she be reimbursed for the extra students, Mrs. Kraft rhetorically asked, when discussing the situation, "Who wants pay?" It would appear, in the case of territory, that in order to be successful in this organization Mrs. Kraft would, at least until tenured, need to be willing to teach introductory first and second year Spanish only part time serving as the "overload" teacher.

Mrs. Kraft's third role in the organization appeared to rest on her Hispanic heritage. In a district publicly concerned with a high Hispanic dropout rate, Maria Kraft was hired to replace another Hispanic bilingual counselor who was on sabbatical. In addition, the fact that she was a native speaker in the language department was enough of a source of pride that it was mentioned by the assistant principal, in his description of the staff. As a matter of fact, she was the only native speaker in the department.

Establishing Classroom Priorities

In addition to her need to adapt to the organizational culture, Mrs. Kraft also had the need to establish herself as a competent teacher of Spanish. Dr. Westinghouse referred to the language department as "not yet being established in the sense of having full-time, all-day instructors." He recognized that communication among staff members for vertical or horizontal curriculum articulation was severely limited by this. Therefore, it was not surprising that Mrs. Kraft had not only the disadvantage of little support by way of contact with the other Spanish teacher, but also had the advantage of a great deal of professional leeway to establish her own style and priorities within her own classroom.

The textbook adopted by the district, Nuestros Amigos, falls into Rivers (1983) category of "skill-getting" and "skill-using" format. Activities were divided between grammar/explanation and drill and "communication" activities. It is this textbook that was the focal point of the curriculum. It was apparently agreed that both Spanish teachers would "cover" eight to ten units per semester. Because she did not have enough textbooks for her students first semester, she was immediately forced to create "packets" of activities that reflected the textbook, but for Maria Kraft the expressed priority was on COMMUNICATION. In our final interview Mrs. Kraft said:

> I enjoy teaching Spanish. I really do, and I enjoy doing a lot of oral practice and listening and all that. So what I really wanted them--of course I taught them the grammar, you know, but I wanted to put a lot of emphasis on the oral--oral practice.

To the end that her expectations and priorities would be explicit, Mrs. Kraft prepared a course outline that she distributed during the first day of class, going over each point carefully, and requiring students to have it signed by their parents (Appendix C). In the outline she states the focus of the course, under the heading entitled, "Purpose."

> To learn the Spanish language and culture. Emphasis will be placed on the skills of listening, speaking, writing and reading, and the focus of the course will be on developing the students' capacities to use the language.

Success for a teacher with such a focus would apparently depend on the extent to which students <u>did</u> develop the capacity to use the language.

It appears, then, that Mrs. Kraft, like her students, came to this classroom with needs and priorities for herself as a new member of an organization and as a professional motivated to establish herself as competent in the classroom.

CHAPTER FIVE: TRYING TO COMMUNICATE

It would appear that the basic underlying motivation of the teacher in this setting was to teach her students to communicate in Spanish. It is important to examine the general concept of such communication through the eyes of the participants, and at the same time to look at situational opportunities and constraints and at participant engagement and resistance in the accomplishment of such a task.

Communication in the Classroom Context

Communication within the school setting is unique. Unlike most other social situations, students in the classroom find themselves in very close proximity to one another, but are often asked to behave as if they were alone with the single adult in the room (see Jackson, 1968). The ratio of teacher to student talk is overwhelmingly one-sided, and it is not characteristic in most classes of 20 or more to have a meaningful and equal exchange of ideas or messages (see Cuban, 1984). If, indeed, a generic definition of communicative competence in a setting centers about the skills needed to "get things done," then it is the teacher who characteristically initiates and orchestrates the communication, and the students who quietly and efficiently follow instructions and appropriately offer short verbal responses to ques-

tions who can be considered most communicatively competent in the typical classroom.

Indeed, this was the norm at Memorial High School. The Memorandum to Parents indicating failure (see Appendix D) includes at least three instances of situations in which students fail to obey or augment these communication norms. A student can fail for talking too much, or in such a way as to disrupt the norm; a student can fail for not following the teacher's directions carefully; and a student can fail for lack of ability or willingness to appropriately initiate communication with the teacher in another setting in order to seek assistance.

The physical setting of the typical classroom encourages one-way communication. Not unlike a theatre, chairs are in regular rows and face in the same direction, discouraging interaction, and encouraging the role of "audience" as opposed to participant. Indeed, in most classrooms, the teacher can see the faces of all students, to monitor for feedback, and survey for adherence to the classroom rules, but students need to make a physical effort to see or verbally communicate with other students.

The classroom in which Mrs. Kraft was assigned to teach sixth and seventh hours was typical of this pattern (see Figure 1). As previously mentioned, however, the room belonged to another teacher. Any attempt to rearrange furniture would have been inconvenient, at best. And, indeed, fieldnote entries indicate that Mrs. Kraft effectively used the classroom arrangement for management purposes, and students used it effectively to meet their social needs.

On the first day of class students were permitted to choose their own seats. As they filtered into the room Mrs. Kraft indicated that they could sit in a seat of their choice. Five or six boys arranged themselves in a row near the windows. Sitting sideways, they were able to survey the entire classroom by moving only their eyes. Other students spread out--several girls and one boy heading directly for the rear of the room. A core of students who had studied with Mr. MacNamara the previous term settled near each other in the center of the room. All of the Black students, but one, sat in contiguous seats. The two independent study students took chairs in opposite corners.

Apparently part of a group of boys who were talking, Don and Trevor were asked to move their seats to the front of the room at the beginning of the second class. By the fourth week Trevor's seat had been moved three times, each time to discourage him from communicating socially, and apparently to encourage him to more quietly focus his attention on the lesson and on the teacher.

Indeed, a room that is set up to discourage participant interaction can be quite effectively used by the teacher to survey and manage disruptions.

Communication in the Foreign Language Classroom

Given that, in this study, foreign language was, indeed, taught in the classroom setting, and did follow a textbook-driven curriculum, one can examine certain similarities and differences between expected communication patterns in this setting and those appropriate to other classes.

The most common type of sanctioned communication in most classrooms, including this one, is between teacher and student/s. The nature of such communication involves establishing classroom order and/or structuring and assessing student learning, often through question and answer, in both oral and written form. Students are used to prescribed rituals for listening to and responding to teacher talk. Likewise, they are used to receiving and responding to written communication through textbooks, handouts or tests. Unlike foreign language, in most classes students' listening skills are presumed, and, at least by the high school level, are not formally taught as part of the curriculum. In some classes listening is very closely linked with "paying attention." Teacher questioning, for example, might serve the dual purposes to assess learning and bring a student back to task. A conversation with Albert Perez and Linda Ainsworth demonstrates that students, at least in this study, are aware of both purposes and see varying risk in a foreign language class in being called on for either.

Linda: (explaining that she prefers 2-3 person conversation groups) [I like them] better than when she'll, like, put you on the spot in front of the whole class because I can never think of anything then.

Me: Do you think that she does that frequently--to put people on the spot?

Linda: No, I think that she just wants to see what you know and what you can do, but it makes me uncomfortable to talk like that in front of all those people.

Albert: She also wants to see if you are paying attention.

Linda: Yea.

Me: ...Which is the worst of the two, do you think--to be caught daydreaming--not know where you are--or to not know the answer?

Linda: Not know the answer--to me it is--not knowing the answer....

Me: How 'bout you, Albert?

Albert: It's probably daydreaming.

Me: For you its daydreaming...Why?

Albert: 'Cause, like, you're thinking somethin' else and they call you. You have to go through the book and find the answer and that makes it worse.

It is interesting to note that Albert is a native speaker of Spanish who is also fluent in English. There was never an instance during the entire term when he was called on in this class that he was unable to quickly indicate what he knew and what he could do in Spanish. The fact that he was called on considerably less than any other student in the class may indicate that he might have had some potential concern to be caught daydreaming.

However, in this foreign language classroom, students were not only concerned about paying attention and giving the right answer to a teacher question in Spanish, but, indeed, about understanding the question itself. Don compared Spanish to his other classes in which he said he felt more successful.

Don: I know what I'm doin' in those classes. Like, in Spanish I don't know the language or nothin' like that, but like those other classes you don't speak another language so I know, like, what they're saying, like when they ask me or something--and I can answer them. Yea.

Still more complicated, in a foreign language class one could be paying attention, understand the question, even know the answer, but be unable to express it correctly.

Me: Is it riskier to get an answer wrong in Spanish than it is in another class?

Alice: Yea. Because in Spanish you get two wrongs--saying it wrong and then being the wrong answer, and, um in English or somethin' you just have one thing wrong.

Like her students, Mrs. Kraft was sensitive to the unique nature of communication within the foreign language classroom. In the course outline (see Appendix C) under the heading of Classroom Expectations she wrote:

> Foreign language classes are unique. We will spend much of the class time listening to and speaking Spanish. Therefore:
>
> Students must concentrate during class.
> Students must listen not only to the teacher but to other students as they ask and answer questions.
> Self-discipline and respect for others are essential in this classroom.

Communication, for Mrs. Kraft, included all four language skills, but she seemed to feel that the oral-aural skills were valued most highly, at least by outsiders. We discussed this in an interview that followed a visit to her class by the superintendent of the district school system.

His visit was less than five minutes in length and took place during the beginning of a class period that had been shortened to fifteen minutes due to a pep assembly. After Mrs.Kraft took care of attendance and the school announcements were given, she permitted the students, some of whom were wearing flowers and carrying valentine balloons, to chat quietly with each other or to chat with me. As I sat perched on the front table listening to students tell me some of their

reasons for enrolling for Spanish, the superintendent walked in and stood by the door, nodding a greeting to me and to Mrs. Kraft. He listened for a moment or two and left apparently to continue his week-long, pre-announced visit to Memorial.

I asked Mrs. Kraft how she had felt about the superintendent's brief visit. She didn't seem at all concerned, saying that he probably assumed that she knew the class period was shortened, and had been clever enough to invite a guest speaker. In a later interview, I asked her what she would have liked him to see going on in her class that day.

Mrs.K.: Well, probably--let's face it, it would look prettier (laugh) nicer--

Me: Prettier.

Mrs.K.: Face it--if the kids were talking and acting a lot --using the language a lot. Sometimes he may walk in when the kids are writing something very quietly. It may not seem like they're doing much, so it would be nice if it were at a time when we are doing some questions and answers and that sort of thing or somebody's reading something and the other person--another student is asking another student questions and that sort of thing.

Me: That would look good?

Mrs.K.: Don't you agree? Yea. It would look good. Oh, I think that all experiences are valuable that they do when they do the writing or the listening is valuable--

Me: Sure. You think that's the one that would be the--?

Mrs.K.: It looks like, like they're using it more. I think this isn't necessarily true 'cause they're using the language when they're writing. They're using the language when they're listening to it-

Me: Right.

Mrs.K.: They're using it. But it looks more active.

Mrs. Kraft recognized, however, that although many people seemed to value oral skills in a foreign language, there was a noticeable resistance by her students to such active, oral participation in this high school classroom setting. She compared it to her experience at the college level.

Me: Do you see any resistance to the oral part?

Mrs.K: Oh, yea. With the high school students.

Me: Is it different for college students?

Mrs.K: A lot different. All the college students want to do is talk.

Me: Really? These students--

Mrs.K: That's the experience that I had last year with the groups that I had. They didn't want to do that much writing.

Me: They wanted to talk? Why would you say--

Mrs.K: Well, the writing. They got the writing but the writing was homework. It was different. I gave them massive amounts of homework every single day. They had homework every single day throughout the term except when they had a test or a quiz.

Me: For the written part, and that's how they did the grammar primarily--and you did the conversation.

Mrs.K: The conversation--the class was entirely devoted to conversation.

Me: How would that work here do you think?

Mrs.K: It wouldn't work with high school students. I don't think.

Me: Why?

Mrs.K: For one thing, I don't know. I don't think they could handle homework every day like that in those amounts. Maybe very few, maybe kids like Glenda or the ones that are very, very dedicated...

Mrs. Kraft apparently sensed student resistance to oral practice in this class, and felt the need to "police" such activities in order that students remain on task.

Trevor: Are we going to do dialogues?

Mrs.K: Yes, but I'm going to go around with my piece of paper to see if you are doing the dialogue--it's not ten minutes of free time. I'm going to go around and do the police work.

This was not her perception, however, for written assignments.

Me: How about for the written practice. Do you find that it is--

Mrs.K: No, they like the written practice....Sometimes if I feel that they're tired I give them something to write and I don't think they mind that. They feel more comfortable with it.

Me: Why?

Mrs.K: I don't know. I really-quite honestly don't know.... [Perhaps] it is because they can see and measure the results, and I give them a paper back saying muy bien /very good/or excelente /excellent/.

Me: I don't know why--

Mrs.K: And the oral part, they don't see what's happening. And besides the oral part is harder for them--much harder.

It would appear, then, that both the teacher and students were aware of the unique nature of the communication process in the foreign language classroom, and the extent to which it differed from the frames of reference developed in other academic settings. It is important, next, to examine their actions in this setting in order to determine

the manners in which participants adapted to or resisted teacher-student classroom communication in Spanish.

The Teacher: Encouraging Students to "Try" to Communicate

Minimizing Pressure and Risk

There were several ways in which Mrs. Kraft established a classroom culture that would encourage students to "try" to communicate. In addition to varying class activities, she provided an atmosphere in which risk of failure or loss of face was minimized.

During oral practice, Mrs. Kraft recognized students' reticence to speak. She was particulary sensitive to those students who had studied with Mr. MacNamara the previous term, as apparently their experience had included less oral practice.

Solita: See, we had Mr. Mac., and we didn't go oral. We just write the vocabulary and that's it....

Mrs.K: O.K., you'll get used to it.

Solita: You think we will get used to it?

Mrs.K: Don't get scared because this is part of learning the language. No need to worry.

During the first week of class, Mrs. Kraft did the first of many listening exercises. Students new to her section dealt with problems of classroom procedure as well as Spanish vocabulary. Mrs. Kraft patiently encouraged and minimized pressure.

Mrs.K: You are going to hear some sentences incorporating [the vocabulary words dealing with foods]. Write the number of the sentence under the picture. (She explains that

she will read each sentence twice and will read slowly). Don't be afraid. This is not a test. Everybody know what you're doing?

Several: Sí.

Mrs.K: Sentence número uno./number one./ (She reads it.) I will say sentence número uno again.

Barbara: Are we supposed to have our book closed?

Student: Barbara! (as if to say, "don't you know any better?")

Mrs.K.: (smiling) Like I told you. It's only a listening exercise.

Dignifying Practice without Penalty

Time after time, Mrs. Kraft told students that mistakes in grammar and form were natural and that she was only concerned that they try to use the vocabulary in order to communicate. At the beginning of the term a new student attempted to avoid giving a response by lowering her eyes and saying, "I don't know."

Mrs.K: I don't like 'I don't know.' I like 'I'll try.' And it doesn't matter if it's right or wrong.

Likewise, for written assignments, Mrs. Kraft made clear that basic use of vocabulary for communication purposes was the objective, and that perfection was hardly necessary.

Mrs.K: (looking at Alice's composition) Excellent...clear composition. If this were worth ten points, I would give you a ten, although it is not perfect...Little mistakes are not important--only clarity of communication.

In another instance, Mrs. Kraft apparently sensed Solita's frustration, and characteristically tried to lower her level of concern.

Mrs.K: Again, this is what we are doing--practice with this. Remember you are not supposed to understand every single word. You got the idea?

Solita: Yea. Yea.

Mrs.K.: Try to have the idea.

Solita: I knew the names and stuff.

Mrs.K.: (toward the class) Don't be so hard on yourselves. I don't expect you to understand every word. There are two purposes for these questions--to hear the words and to practice the forms.

Throughout the term, Mrs. Kraft made it clear that she understood how difficult communication in another language was, but that if students would "try," they would be rewarded.

Trevor: Why can't you tell us in English?

Mrs.K.: This is not the way you learn another language. I promise you--this will work. When you read in English, even, now, you don't know every word. You figure out by the context. Transfer those skills you have in English to Spanish. And you can do it. I know you can.

During a class exercise later in the term, Mrs. Kraft summarized her characteristic tone used to encourage communication.

Mrs.K.: Use words without fear. You will never be penalized for trying to use words.

Creating Patterns of Positive Reinforcement and Non-Threatening Methods of Correction

Mrs. Kraft also established a strong and recognizable pattern of regular positive reinforcement accompanied by a non-threatening method of correction. I would estimate that she told a student that he/she

was wrong fewer than five times the entire semester. Rather, she either ignored the error, or correctly stated the response, sometimes asking the student to repeat the acceptable form. The words muy bien /very good/ and excelente /excellent/ abounded in every class, very often accompanied by a wink, a sincere smile of pride and a gesture of perfection made by forming a circle with the forefinger and thumb. For example, during the third week of class she displayed a transparency on the overhead projector and said:

Mrs.K: I'll give you picture and I want you to describe. Don't worry about grammar and form--just use the words...I want you to tell me about the picture. Hay dos chicas. Nadan. Hace sol. Hace calor. /There are two girls. They are swimming. It is sunny. It's hot./--anything you can make up. I just want you to look in the words. Vale? /Is that understood?/

Students: Vale.

Mrs.K.: (winks and smiles) Sí, vale.

Rob Gomez is called on first.

Rob: Hace...dos chicos. Es nadar...Hace mucho caliente. /It's...two boys. He is to swim. It's pretty warm./

Mrs.K: Calor. Muy bien, muy bien. Excelente. /Hot. Very good, very good. Excellent./

So common and pervasive was this pattern of reinforcement, that many of the students were able to repeat it word for word during interview sessions.

Me: How does Mrs. Kraft react when you make a mistake?

Ellen: She helps us out.

Charu: What I notice is every time, every time you hear someone, no matter how bad somebody did, Mrs. Kraft always goes 'muy bien, muy bien.'

Ellen: (agreeing) Um hum.

Charu: No matter how bad somebody does.

Me: How do you feel about that?

Ellen: I like it..She doesn't make you feel so stupid.

Likewise, in an interview with Alice and Glenda:

Me: How about Mrs. Kraft? How does she relate to wrong answers. Would she laugh?

Both: No.

Me: How do you feel about her as far as giving answers or trying to give an answer?

Alice: She tries to help us out. I mean if ya give back wrong answers, then she'll correct us.

Me: How do you know it's wrong?

Alice: Because--I dunno--well, she might correct you and you'll know its wrong--like you say one thing and then she'll say another. (laugh)

Me: Have you ever heard her say something is wrong?

Alice: No.

In addition to providing her own positive reinforcement, Mrs. Kraft was conscious of protecting students from the occasional overt ridicule of their peers. During the fourth week of class, an exercise called for the discussion of sports and sporting equipment. Trevor, whose career goal is in professional baseball, had been displaying characteristic disengagement from the lesson. He perked up when he heard the cognate, béisbol /baseball/.

Trevor: What did she just ask?

Mrs. Kraft translates the question--"What does equipo /team/ mean?"

Trevor: equipment?

Alonso: (laughs)

Mrs.K.: You don't need to laugh.

Alonso: It's funny.

Mrs.K.: (firmly) No, it isn't.

Allowing Time for Students to Form a Response

Finally, Mrs. Kraft dignified the difficulty of communication in Spanish, and allowed time for students to form at least an initial response, as she helped them complete or refine their answer. Wait time was characteristically long in this classroom. For example, in an exercise in which students were asked to form sentences with new vocabulary words, there were periods of silence ranging from a few seconds to 50 seconds. It took Linda more than two minutes to make her sentence with the prompting of Mrs. Kraft who interjected:

Mrs.K: Take your time. There is no hurry. We are just practicing.

It was clearly evident, then, that Mrs. Kraft encouraged students to try to communicate in Spanish by minimizing the pressure of performance, by dignifying the necessity of less-than-perfect practice without penalty, and by creating a strong pattern of positive reinforcement coupled with an understood method of non-threatening correction.

The Students: Resistance to Classroom Communication

Indeed, most students did try to communicate at one time or another in Spanish. However, resistance to activities in Spanish was clearly evident. It took at least two forms. Several students were actively and noticeably resistant to engagement in communicative activities; others were passively resistant.

Active Resistance

During our final interview Mrs. Kraft and I discussed the problem of resistance to oral activities.

Me: We're told to motivate in teacher education...but the kids use the word 'push'.

Mrs.K: Well, they feel like they have to--

Me: Do you feel that you are pushing, insisting, threatening--making it come down to the grade?

Mrs.K: (emotionally) You are an experienced teacher, so you know. How many people does it take to spoil the mood of an activity you want to do?

Me: (softly) I would guess--one.

Mrs.K: (voice rising) One can really mess it up, can really mess it up, can really put like a wet blanket on everybody and that puts like an embarrassment thing on the kids--the kids don't want to try.

There appears to be something of a hierarchy of active resistance. Minor occurrences can be overlooked or actually worked into the lesson. Blatant resistance can put the lid on an activity.

Two students in this class regularly and actively resisted classroom activities. The first was Trevor and the second was Solita.

It would have been impossible to overlook freshman Trevor Glouster in this classroom. His words from the back of the room on the first day of class set the tone.

> Mrs. Kraft introduces herself and indicates that she wants to spend the first class introducing students to the course.
>
> Mrs.K.: I'm going to pass some index cards and I want you to write that [referring to information written on an overhead transparency] information.
>
> Trevor: (interrupting) I want to get out of this class!

In our interview at the end of the term Trevor expressed frustration when discussing his two terms of Spanish with Mrs. Kraft. Due to scheduling problems he got off to a late start in Spanish I, and apparently he felt he never could catch up. He spoke of the difficulty he had with the sound/symbol connections in Spanish, how hard it was for him to write things down or spell them. He spoke of a childlike feeling that trying to learn a foreign language engendered.

> Trevor: I dunno. Just like startin' all over, like when you were a little kid tryin' to learn a different language and I dunno, I just--It seems like, ya know, it takes time for a kid to learn how to talk and stuff, and it seems like she expects us ta learn it, I mean in a certain amount of time, and I just can't do that.

Indeed, Trevor may have sincerely felt that he <u>couldn't</u> learn Spanish, but it was also evident to him that he <u>wouldn't</u> even try. In the same interview:

> Trevor: ...I dunno, just something that I don't really understand it. See with me, I mean I know it's wrong, my mom always tells me and stuff, when something doesn't come easy to me that I like, I dunno, I just shove it

> off or I--because, I dunno, why. I just don't. When things don't come easy to me, I just get upset and stuff and don't really try that hard.

Trevor's behavior drew attention to himself. For example, in one class period in February, I counted 24 instances of behavior that could be construed as disruptive. There were instances ranging from his ritual quest for a pencil to eleven verbal interruptions of the class including a request for a food day that he repeated several times. He audibly tapped his pencil and scribbled on the back of Alonso's chair. And when Mrs. Kraft approached him to encourage him back to task in a vocabulary exercise:

Trevor: Mrs. Kraft, you lied to me. You said the words were there.

Mrs.K: I'm telling you. You have to find it. You have to know what the words mean--at least what the sentence is about.

Trevor: But I don't know these words.

Occasionally he'd offer a smart-aleck answer. Mrs. Kraft was sometimes able to diffuse the impact and dignify the response as part of the learning.

Mrs.K: (in reviewing comprehension questions for the chapter's reading) Al centro. ¿Para qué van al centro? /Downtown. Why were they going downtown?/ Michelle, what does para qué mean?

Alonso: For what.

Mrs.K: (continuing to prompt with a "come forward" gesture) For what reason are they going downtown?

Trevor: They don't have a mall.

Mrs.K: They don't have many malls. In those places the concept hasn't caught up with them.

It was routine for Trevor to ask for directions after they had been given, and to appear upset if Mrs. Kraft did not answer his questions right away.

Mrs.K: Let's go to el libro de español /the Spanish book/ to la página noventa y cuatro. /page ninety four/ This reading was a little bit harder. I have some questions about the reading. We are going to do them orally. Then we are going to write them down. (She passes out the sheet with the questions) I'll give you a minute to look over....Maybe there are some words that didn't print very well. Let's go over...If you don't know any words, underline them...This is also a practice on question words.

Trevor: Do we write them?

Student: No!

As Mrs. Kraft reads the questions, most eyes are on the papers. Trevor puts a small piece of crumbled paper down Alonso's coat neck.

Mrs.K: First we'll do orally and then we'll write them down. Do you need a minute to go over the reading? Sí o no? /Yes or no?/

Students: (No response.)

Mrs.K: I don't think we need to. We can find them as we go. (She calls on Mercedes for number 1.)

Trevor: Are we supposed to write on the back? Are we supposed to write them as they say them?

Mrs. Kraft doesn't answer right away.

Trevor: Forget it.

Mrs.K: Forget it? (A bit confused, she turns her attention again to Mercedes.)

A sample of Trevor's written work (see Figure 2) mirrors his frustration and resistance. Ten minutes after the assignment was distributed and explained, Trevor had not yet started. After about eight minutes of intermittent requests to other students for a pencil, Mrs. Kraft provided him with one. Characteristically, he asked for the directions to be repeated.

Trevor: Mrs. Kraft, do we just put down what's in this picture, like?

Mrs. Kraft explains again that they are to write the questions, then the short composition.

Trevor: Like that, right there? (He had hastily written several questions.)

Mrs.K: Is that what's in the picture? Are those questions? (She moves around a row of seats to be closer to him.) If I don't see a question mark, I'll assume they're statements. [She encourages him to describe the picture by being] creative with the vocabulary.

Trevor: I don't have a creative mind.

Mrs.K: I'm sure you do.

As the term progressed, Trevor had managed to violate nearly every "rule" that was outlined in the document he and his family had signed the first day (see Appendix C). He pushed the limits, by chewing gum, bringing pop, visiting, being disruptive, not having materials, sleeping through class (including exams), and not willingly participating. It is important to note that Trevor <u>did</u> complete assignments, and after parent/teacher conferences did arrange to meet Mrs. Kraft for "extra help." These instances of "trying" will be discussed later.

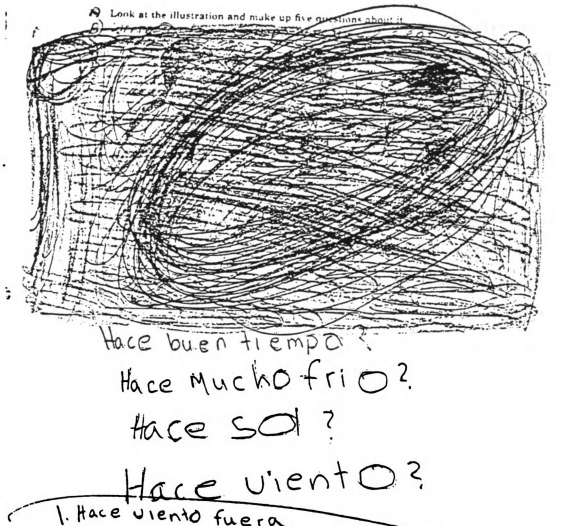


Figure 2. Sample of Trevor's Written Work.

Solita Jackson, a graduating senior, is an example of a student who _became_ actively resistant to communication in foreign language after a period of apparently sincere effort to "try to communicate." Solita had studied with Mr. MacNamara during the first semester for Spanish I and she continued to serve as his student aide one period per day. She had apparently developed two methods for negotiating school culture, at least as demonstrated in this class. First, she was outgoing, enthusiastic and had an engaging smile. Second, she was very verbal and used words both to bargain and to confront.

Solita's enthusiasm and apparent perseverance served her well during the first six weeks of the course. As previously mentioned, Mrs. Kraft was aware that Mr. MacNamara's former students had had little exposure to activities that required oral or written use of the language to communicate, and she was anxious to put his students at ease and help them develop these skills that she considered so important. During the first week, Solita laboriously worked through an exercise. Mrs. Kraft called on her, and she responded that she couldn't do it.

Mrs.K: Give it a try.

Jack: Come on, Solita.

Solita: I ain't perfect, guys.

Mrs.K: (prompting) _Si llueve_ /If it is raining/--then what do you think?

Solita: _Si hace_ /If it's/--(pause) O.K. I got it now--_Si hace buen_ /If it's nice/--

Other students apparently try to help her.

Solita: That's O.K. I want to do it myself.

Mrs.K: Don't tell her.

Solita: O.K. I got it. (She gives two or three more tries.)

For the next two minutes, Mrs. Kraft sticks with Solita as Sara passes a note back to Linda, Ellen exchanges a word or two with Sara, Rob audibly yawns and Don and Trevor whisper.

Mrs.K: (accepting Solita's final version) Sí, es lógico. Vale. /Yes, that's logical. Fine./ If you write that on an exam, I'll accept it.

Several students who had been following Solita's attempts reward her with a "Yea!"

And Solita continued to "try" to communicate and apparently to feel rewarded for doing so. During the third week the activity involved orally describing some pictures on an overhead transparency. Solita was called on:

Solita: (squinting) First, what is he doing? I ain't got my glasses. That's why. Um--Um---Le gasta-- um--la chico? (Trying to say'the boy likes'--several grammatical and pronunciation errors)

All of the students are quiet except for Sara and Rob who are whispering.

Solita: I want to say something, but I don't know how to say it. It's too hard.

Mrs.K: Try. It's saying something that counts.

Alonso smiles like a parent as Solita begins to work through her response.

Solita: How do you say--<u>hace buen tiempo</u>. /It's nice weather./ (Obviously pleased with her correct answer she flashes a big smile and makes a "wave" dance motion with her right arm extended into the aisle.)

And Solita seemed curious about Spanish. One day before class during the fifth week she asked Mrs. Kraft if you could "rap" in Spanish.

Solita: If they rap in Spanish, you wouldn't know...

Mrs.K: (laughs and nods enthusiastically) You can do that in any language.

Solita is apparently satisfied that Mrs. Kraft both knows what rapping is and finds it possible in Spanish.

Solita's early written work (see Figure 3) also showed that she was making an attempt to use some of the vocabulary. But by the end of the fifth week, frustration was clearly evident. Following a listening exercise, students were asked to answer some questions about the passage.

Solita: Why should we listen if we don't know them words. (to Trevor) You probably heard them before.

Mrs.K: That's part of what we are doing.

Mrs. Kraft offers to read the passage one more time.

Solita: (slouching down in her seat) No use.

Mrs. Kraft tries to encourage her and stresses that it is a lot easier to write than to listen.

Look at the illustration and make up five questions about it.

B) Write a short Composition _ 8 sentences

1. ~~[illegible]~~ A niños les gusta bola

2. A ellas les gusta hacer sol.

3. ~~[illegible]~~ A Willie y a Remond les gusta el ~~[illegible]~~ volibol.

4. Y jugan bolas ~~[illegible]~~

5. Juegan en un equipo?

6.

Figure 3. Sample of Solita's Early Written Work.

Mrs.K: Listening is a part of learning language--a very important part. (She encourages both Solita and Trevor to answer just the first and last questions on the sheet).

Trevor: I don't know how to answer questions.

Solita: (almost to herself) I don't know nothing, so I'm going to look up the words and turn it in on time.

Mrs. Kraft did not at first send a failure notice to Solita for the initial marking period, because she perceived that Solita was "really trying." But that perception seemed to dull somewhat before the end of the six-weeks marking period. Solita was often late for class, she was confrontational about leaving class for the restroom, and she needed to be reminded of other school rules, including the use of sunglasses in class. And, indeed, Solita had a quiz average of 54% and a test average of 33%. That, coupled with the fact that she had completed only three of 12 homework assignments caused Mrs. Kraft to compare Solita to the other students from Mr. MacNamara's class who seemed to be doing better and to change her mind. Solita received a failing grade of E for the first grading period.

Mrs. Kraft reported that Solita had gone to her counselor and requested a transfer from this Spanish class. Apparently, the request was denied, and Solita's efforts noticeably shifted. Several times she suggested that Mrs. Kraft present the material as Mr. MacNamara had done. Solita no longer showed the perseverance to work through a communication problem unaided. She continued to arrive late for class and began sleeping in class. Although her test grades improved, and she received a C for the second grading period, Solita continued to bargain and confront.

On May 13, Mrs. Kraft attempted what she called "an experiment." Using the blackboard to demonstrate and the textbook vocabulary as a base, Mrs. Kraft began to give directions to an exercise in Spanish. Several students were somewhat confused, and resistant. Mrs. Kraft repeated the directions several times when Solita somewhat belligerently inquired if the assignment would be done orally. Mrs. Kraft responded that it would be written, and continued:

Solita: (interrupting) So what do we do?

Mrs.K: You listen and you'll know what you do. Don't waste time.

Solita: I don't even know what you're talking about. (Her tone is defiant.)

Mrs.K: If you don't talk, you may be able to listen.

Solita continues to mutter audibly that she doesn't know what's going on and that she can't follow the exercise. Mrs. Kraft presses on with the experiment.

Mrs.K: So we'll go through the list and pick--

Solita: (interrupting once again) You just said we're doing it orally.

Mrs.K: If you know the word, <u>escribir</u>, like the others, you would know it means to write.

Solita winds up her defiance arguing that she doesn't know what she's supposed to do.

Mrs.K: Enough!

But, indeed, that was the beginning of the end for the experiment. The rhythm was never fully established and within a few minutes

Mrs. Kraft had abandoned the Spanish directions, continuing the vocabulary review in English.

The next day, Mrs. Kraft approached me and expressed frustration over this incident. She felt that the other students were beginning to get into the exercise, and that Solita had "spoiled it."

The active resistance demonstrated by both Trevor and Solita did not go unnoticed by the other students in the class. In interviews, students frequently defined a "good class" in terms of the students in that class, as opposed to the content curriculum or the skill of the teacher. I spoke with Tracey and Michelle the day after the "experiment."

Me: Can a teacher take a bad or ordinary class and make it good?

Tracey: It'd need a miracle or somethin'.

Me: So you can't be a good teacher with bad students?

Michelle: You can be a good teacher, but if you have cutups in there and, ya know, people like that, I mean you would try to make it a good class, I mean, some people, or half the majority of the class, uh, respects you, but then there's the other half, ya know, 'cause I've known that for a long time. They just, ya know, take advantage of the teacher.

Me: Is Mrs. Kraft respected as a teacher?

Michelle: I would think she is, except for some of the people that are really cutups.

Me: Who?

Michelle: Like Trevor and--

Tracey: Like Solita--like how she was acting yesterday.

Passive Resistance

The actively resistant students in this classroom were relatively easy to identify through their overtly disruptive behavior and through their explicit statements that they would not try to communicate in Spanish.

A second group of students also resisted classroom communicative activities, but in a different manner. For the purpose of contrast, I have called these students "passively resistant." Their behavior was characterized by frequent, but relatively unobtrusive, disengagement from classroom activities. Paradoxically, however, they also expressed during interviews a clear interest in learning to speak Spanish. Their lack of participation in communicative experiences appeared to be connected to a variety of sources including: a lack of academic ability, poorly developed interactive skills, a tendency to have a short attention span and/or to be easily "bored", and, perhaps, a desire to "get by" with the least amount of effort and involvement. Although most students showed some resistance at one time or another, and "bargained" for less engaged time, two students--Sara and Ellen--seem to best exemplify this type of resistance.

Mrs. Briggs, Sara's mother, told me in an interview, that she was "hesitant" to recommend foreign language as an elective to her freshman daughter since she felt that Sara "sometimes struggles" academically. Mrs. Briggs said that when Sara and her brother were enrolled first semester in the same section of Spanish I with Mrs. Kraft.

Mrs. Briggs: Many times I actually held my breath [for Sara]. Her brother got an A, but Sara does struggle.

Mrs. Briggs continued that she didn't discourage Sara, and, in fact, was pleased that Sara persevered--that "she wants to learn and is willing to struggle." Even after her brother was rescheduled to Mr. MacNamara's section for Spanish II, Sara continued to talk in Spanish with him at home, and, actually, spent more effort studying than did her brother.

Sara's behavior in class did not appear to reflect the perseverance that her mother saw at home. Sara's most frequent classtime activity was friendly note-writing. Very social, she and Linda had a regular habit of exchanging notes with one another, and writing them to others apparently outside of the class.

Sara's level of frustration seemed to be rather low. For example, during the second week of class, Mrs. Kraft had an exercise dealing with the Spanish alphabet, designed as a review for her students, and a brief introduction for those who may not have had it with Mr. MacNamara. As she spelled them aloud in Spanish, Mrs. Kraft asked students to write ten words. Sara stopped at number three--apparently frustrated, she resumed her letter writing.

Evidently, the low frustration level coupled with the letter-writing caused a double problem for Sara. As discussed previously, she not only did not know where the class was (and was called on occasionally to be brought back to task), but she had a difficult time answering even when she was following. It was hard to tell which was the real source of her problems. Fieldnotes for March 9 show a typical interchange:

Seconds after Linda passes a note to Sara via Rob, Mrs. Kraft calls on Sara to respond to a question from the text dealing with the reading and requiring the use of the preterite form of ir:/to go/.

Mrs.K: ¿En qué fueron Pilar y sus primos a la Cibeles? /How did Pilar and her cousins go to the Cibeles Fountain?/

Sara: (looks confused, then, softly) Subway.

Apparently Mrs. Kraft doesn't hear her.

Trevor: (interjects) She said something.

Mrs. Kraft cups her hand over her ear.

Sara: (repeats softly) Subway.

Mrs.K: I want you to answer in a whole sentence.

Sara characteristically opens to the glossary in the back of the book.

Mrs.K: This is to practice ir forms. What is the pronoun--ellos, /they/ right? What corresponds to ellos? /they/ It's right here (referring to page on which the exercise is located).

Sara: I don't know.

Mrs.K: Fueron, /they went/ right? Pilar y sus primos fueron a la Cibeles--/Pilar and her cousins went to the Cibeles Fountain--/

Sara: subway--

Mrs.K: --en metro./on the subway./

The refuge to the glossary and the short, softly-spoken, one-word answers were characteristic not only of Sara's responses, but also of

those given by other students as they sought to disengage from an activity.

Both Rob and Linda actively tried to help Sara, and she was most willing to accept their assistance. In an exercise in which three students reviewed the vocabulary, the first student repeated the word, the second gave its meaning in English, and the third made a sentence using the word.

> For the word, pastorelas,/Christmas festivities/, Albert repeats, Ellen translates, and Sara is called on for the sentence. Sara has a magazine open on her desk nearly covering her book, which is turned to the vocabulary page. She looks down.
>
> Mrs.K: You could say something related to the reading in the book.
>
> Sara continues to stare at the book. Rob half turns to help her.
>
> Sara: Me gusta las pastorelas. /I like the Christmas festivities./
>
> Mrs.K: Me gustan las pastorelas. Muy bien. (Correcting a grammar error) /I like the Christmas festivities. Very good./

Sara, indeed, appeared to be afloat in this class. Her efforts to communicate focused on Linda, and her ability and attempts to keep up with classroom activities in Spanish were minimal. Interestingly, Sara reported that she and Linda used Spanish outside of the classroom during at least one sleepover, when they exchanged their teenage secrets in Spanish to keep them away from their parents' ears.

Ellen, on the other hand, might best be characterized as non-responsive. Although she gained confidence in herself as the term went

on, she never appeared to be motivated to fully engage in communicative activities. It was not unusual to see Ellen packing up to be ready to leave class well before the final bell, and adjusting her make-up now and again during class. At the beginning of the term, Ellen often put her eyes down when called on, and employed responses such as "I didn't get that one" apparently to avoid the pressure of wait time, and the threat of an incorrect answer. She spoke very softly from her seat in the back of the room and occasionally Mrs. Kraft would move on to another student without hearing her.

In an interview, Ellen said she took Spanish because she thought it would be "fun:"

Me: How about you, Ellen?

Ellen: Why I took it?

Me: Yea.

Ellen: Because I thought it would be fun.

Me: Is it?

Ellen: Yea--It's O.K....It can get boring.

Me: What's the most fun about it--for you?

Ellen: Oh, I don't know,probably when we get ta be like, with groups of people and, like, do exercises.

Me: How do you feel, then, about speaking in class or about hearing Spanish in class?

Ellen: It doesn't bother me, speaking, but I can't pronounce a lot of that stuff. It's O.K.

Me: Is that something you really wanted to do in Spanish?

Ellen: Yea.

Me: To be able to speak and understand it?

Ellen: Um Hum.

Ellen continued that Spanish was different from her other classes in that in most other class settings, she was not required to "speak out or anything like that." And although Ellen perceived that she was speaking out in Spanish class, it was not strongly evident. As a matter of fact, she spoke very seldom to anyone, even in English, and, perhaps for that very reason, was called on somewhat less than those who obviously needed to be brought back to task.

Ellen seemed to be comfortable paired with Sara, and in six of the seven exercises I observed in which students worked in groups of two Sara and Ellen were together. On one day Sara was absent and Mrs.Kraft suggested that Albert and Ellen work together since they were seated next to each other. Both shy, they said nothing to Mrs. Kraft nor to each other for the length of the exercise. Mrs. Kraft apparently didn't notice as she characteristically attempted to move around the room "policing" the activity.

During the "experiment" Ellen displayed an audible sense of frustration with the directions in Spanish. About a minute into the instructions:

Mrs.K: (starting instructions for the second time) This is an experiment. Vamos a dividir en tres partes./ Let's divide into three parts./ Everyone with me?

Several students nod affirmatively.

Mrs.K: (continuing) We determined that the first section is comidas, la segunda--/meals, the second--/

Ellen: (with a disgusted look on her face) Why doesn't she speak in English? (She looks down.)

Nevertheless, it should be noted that once the exercise was underway, Ellen was able to participate, and did so without error.

The Native Speakers in a Communicative Setting

It is, likewise, important in this chapter to examine the communication efforts of those Hispanic students in this class who possessed well-developed communicative competencies before entering the course.

The two native speakers in this setting seemed to fall at opposite ends of a continuum in the way they handled the use of skills already developed before entering Spanish II. On one hand, Albert sat quietly, speaking when spoken to, and downplaying his ability. On the other hand, Alonso turned his acknowledged skills into a power that needed to be reckoned with by the teacher and harnessed by his fellow students.

By nature, Albert appeared to be very shy. He sat in the back of the room next to his sister Lucinda, and in all my observations, I only twice saw him initiate a conversation with anyone else but her. His isolation was most noticeable when students worked in pairs,and Albert was either one of the last to be chosen or was paired with another student by Mrs. Kraft, and then did not interact. Albert obediently completed all other assignments, however, and was generally one of the first ones finished with quizzes and exams. Although his written work (see Figure 4) showed errors in capitalization, spelling, punctuation and agreement, it also demonstrated communicative competence well

A Look at the illustration and make up five questions about it.

B) Write a short composition - 8 sentences

1. ¿hace viento?

2. ¿tienen una bola de futbol?

3. ¿los chicos juegan en un equipo?

4. ¿Que hace la chica?

5. ¿hace frio o hace calor?

el chico y la chica juegan en un equipo de futbol.
la chica quere jugar pero no la dejan.
Hace Sol pero hace mucho viento tambien.
el chico y la chica usan uniforme de futbol, tambien
el chico tiene la bola de futbol.
Es una dia estupenda para jugar futbol.
A ellos les gusta ganar todos los juegos.

Figure 4. Sample of Albert's Written Work.

beyond that required in this class. He seemed reticent, however, to show off his ability.

Mrs.K: O.K., we have just a few minutes. I want to ask two or three students to read their compositions.

Alice reads hers. All are quiet with eyes on their own desks. No one makes eye contact with Alice.

Mrs.K: This is a very nice one. She's very creative using words from all chapters. Any others? Don?

Don: No.

Mrs.K: Didn't finish?

Don: No.

Mrs.K: Albert?

He shakes his head no.

Mrs.K: ¿Por qué no? /Why not?/

Albert gives in and reads what sounds like a flawless composition. There is no eye contact or reaction from the class.

Later in the term, however, Sara had a noticeable reaction to Albert's ability to answer so quickly and accurately.

Albert: (answering in a native accent) A un pet shop del barrio./ At a neighborhood pet shop./

Sara: Ooh--Ooh.

Mrs. Kraft recognized Albert's ability and, likewise, recognized the fact that she did not include him often in classroom interaction. In fact, for a period of five weeks between February 23 and March 16, Albert was not called on once in the regular class periods I observed.

On March 26, I noticed that Albert had a relatively poor test score (80%), and I inquired about it to Mrs. Kraft. She said she had noticed that he had missed a lot of the preterite forms and added:

Mrs.K: I know I don't call on him very much. I know that's not right, but he really doesn't need it.

At the end of the term we briefly discussed Albert once again, and Mrs. Kraft felt his experience in Spanish II was worthwhile, at least to an extent.

Mrs.K: (referring to both Albert and Alonso) Their proficiency was really very, very, very good and the listening was no problem. Well, with Albert, I noticed that there were some little picky grammatical things that he didn't know that he learned. So it isn't that it was just sitting there boring for him because in some of the exams he made some mistakes in certain things.

Alonso, however, was not as "invisible" as Albert in the classroom. In fact, he was quite visible. A husky freshman, Alonso frequently wore a black tweed overcoat to class, which helped to enhance a "fatherly" smile of mild amusement he often showed as he watched his classmates struggle to communicate.

Not only was he visible, he was also frequently heard. He often disregarded the turn-taking system of the classroom and offered answers unsolicited or after another student had been named to respond. For example, early in the term Mrs. Kraft called on Solita to complete an exercise.

Mrs.K: (trying to help Solita) What's the form that corresponds to Lupe?

Alonso: Ella./she/

Solita works through the sentence and Alonso smiles at her as if watching a child.

Alonso consistently gave any translation immediately after Mrs. Kraft asked for it, and he seemed disturbed if his "expert territory" was violated.

Mrs.K: What is the meaning of pájaro? /bird/

Sara: Bird.

Alonso: (apparently surprised that he wasn't the first to shout it out, turns) Who said that?

Mrs. Kraft recognized that Alonso "never waits until you finish saying something. He jumps three steps away." So, after a few weeks she routinely tried to stop Alonso from answering before she could chose another student.

Mrs.K: ¿Cómo se dice /how does one say/ a little squirrel? (to Alonso) Don't say it! (She makes a stop motion with her hand thrust in his direction.)

Alonso: Ah, Mrs. Kraft---

In fact, Mrs. Kraft apparently became quite frustrated with Alonso for a number of reasons. Not only did he already speak Spanish, but he often flaunted his skill by interrupting her efforts to control the communication flow of the classroom, often preventing her from taking charge of the pace of the lesson or accurately assessing the learning of the other students. She considered Alonso a potential "discipline problem."

On the other hand, she knew that he was in a class beneath his ability level, and she recognized that some of his behavior resulted

from boredom. During the third week of class Mrs.Kraft told Alonso that she would speak to Mr. MacNamara about transferring to a Spanish IV class. Apparently she did so several times. But her currency as a non-tenured, first year teacher was not enough to intercede for Alonso. Apparently, Mr.MacNamara's classes were full. Hers were no longer full. Mr. MacNamara apparently didn't need another student. Alonso lost out all around.

As a stopgap substitute, Mrs. Kraft tried to offer Alonso a type of independent study arrangement telling him that he could work at his own pace. It was immediately obvious, however, that Alonso needed close monitoring.

Mrs.K: (to Alonso) Are you doing what I told you?

Alonso: I'm done.

Mrs.K: Did you write those exercises?

Alonso: No.

Mrs.K: I want you to do that instead of talk.

Therefore, it was not long before Alonso settled back to find his place in this classroom setting. He continued to finish his assignments quickly and was reprimanded for talking to Trevor and Don who had nearly never finished. He continued to offer answers, unsolicited, and occasionally imitated Mrs. Kraft's slight accent. He moved around the room more than any other student, sharpening his pencil and getting paper for himself and others. He expressed disdain when Mrs. Kraft could not provide him with Kleenex when he had a cold. Mrs. Kraft noticed his apparently inappropriate classroom manners.

Mrs. Kraft distributes an exercise in which students are to conjugate a list of words. Alonso receives his paper.

Alonso: Mrs. Kraft. Yo--Ms. Kraft--

Apparently she doesn't hear him or chooses to help Solita, Barbara and Trevor who are asking about the directions. Once the class is on task, Alonso tries again.

Alonso: (to Mrs. Kraft) Come here.

Mrs.K: What's the magic word?

Alonso: Please.

Mrs.K: O.K. (she moves to his chair)

But, perhaps, Alonso's biggest source of power came in a way that Mrs. Kraft apparently <u>didn't</u> observe. He became a vital strategic resource for Don. No secret to most class members, Don copied the answers to nearly every quiz and exam directly from Alonso's properly placed paper. It appeared to be a symbiotic relationship. Don received good grades; Alonso gained status with an upperclassman and wielded considerable strategic expert power. It is possible that Alonso did not have such power in his other classes, because he apparently felt a need to validate his strength by comparing his grades publicly and routinely with Glenda.

In this study, then, it appears that a student who already possesses communication skills in the foreign language being taught can either quietly conform to classroom activities without drawing attention to himself or herself, or can use those skills to consciously or unconsciously interrupt the routine classroom communication patterns

and serve as a strategic resource to other students for whom "trying to communicate" is not a high priority.

CHAPTER SIX: TRYING TO GET THE GRADE

Introduction

It would appear that credentialing--getting into college or out of high school--was the major underlying motivation of students in this classroom. That importance was manifested through the use of a currency that revolved around grades and drove the majority of transactive interactions dealing with accountability and measures of success. Just as the teacher was interested in having students "try to communicate," and she both explicitly and implicitly encouraged this, most students were interested in "trying to achieve acceptable grades" and used their considerable knowledge of the power and limits of the school culture to reach their goal:

Me: What's the final, final goal of trying?

Rob: To be able to speak fluently in another language.

Me: To be able to speak fluently in this class. What's your final goal of trying, then, in this class?

Mike: (3 seconds) I dunno--to get, to get a good grade.

Me: To get a good grade. Jack, you're kinda nodding. Is that the goal too--to try--

Jack: Yea. It's ta pass it so I can graduate.

Me: Pass? Anuja?

Anuja: Just ta try and pass with at least with a C, I mean, ya know. At least a passing grade so--

The power, publicness and pervasiveness of the grade as a currency understood and used within the school culture is substantial and of long-standing duration. However, it is important to note that the grade as a medium of exchange is used not only within the classroom, the school and the district, but, indeed, in its averaged form, is transcribed for distribution to parents, colleges and potential employers. Its value to the student is, to a great extent, based on its value to this variety of concerned constituencies. That is, it is worth something to the student who desires to use it to interact effectively with those constituencies. Conversely, it is of little or no use to a student whose constituencies, including peers, value other currencies. Likewise, for the teacher, who has apparent formal control over the grade, its power can be harnessed to motivate, regulate or punish to the extent that it holds value to the student.

On a continuum, the lowest grade is called "failure," and in this setting is referred to by the teacher as "not making it." The highest grade is A, and for many of the participants is considered a measure of "success." There is a clear indication of affective tension noticeable in transactions involving the use of this currency.

Although traditionally associated with achievement, data from this study seem to indicate that a grade may or may not reflect a measureable amount of achievement or proficiency in language learning. It may, however, reflect how hard the student apparently "tried" to succeed by following the classroom, school, and societal norms for behavior and success.

As with most well-established currency systems, the determination of a grade in this class apparently depended on a complex series of interdependent variables. Some of these variables were measureable; others were not. Some were strong enough to stand virtually alone; others needed to be negotiated in combination. Mrs. Kraft was explicit after the first unit test in outlining these variables. She included: test scores, homework, class participation, and "extra credit."

Test Scores--A Measure of Achievement?

The only variable that appeared to measure accountability through academic achievement or the display of proficiency in the development of language skills was the test score. During each of the three six-week grading periods, Mrs. Kraft gave quizzes and unit examinations. The quizzes, one for each of the units, generally measured vocabulary development--the ability to translate individual words from Spanish to English and from English to Spanish, and the ability to use Spanish words in context. Mrs. Kraft prepared these quizzes herself and graded them on a percentage scale, with a liberal acceptance of spelling errors and accent use.

The six unit examinations were prepared from materials developed by the textbook publisher and characteristically included the measurement of listening comprehension, accurate use of grammatical forms and conjugations, use of vocabulary in context, and general use of written language skills to answer personal questions.

The semester final examination was comprehensive, covering all of the units. In addition to the selected skills tested in written form,

Mrs. Kraft also provided an activity that allowed students to use oral skills in a test-like setting. In this activity, students were asked to choose a topic at random (involving the vocabulary covered during the term) and discuss it briefly with her while she encouraged in English and prompted with questions in Spanish. Mrs. Kraft described the manner in which she assessed the various language skills on tests:

> You know when they write and when they answer questions you know that I go for communication. I don't go for picky, picky...If they used the words, that's what I was looking for. Vocabulario. Then they got the maximum points... For the grammar they get tested picky, picky, like for the verb endings--they didn't have it right, that was it.

With a point system and a percentage grade attached to test scores, it was relatively easy to determine how much currency one had toward the compilation of a marking period grade. Although Mrs. Kraft explicitly stated after the first major examination that test and quiz scores composed only 45% of the final grade, it was apparent that students with high test scores received high grades. In this class, students never received a final grade lower than the average of their quiz and test scores. For some students, then, the achievement of high test scores was an important part of "trying to get a good grade."

There appeared to be at least three ways to control the impact that test scores had on a final grade. The first technique involved the achievement of good test scores by already knowing or studying the right material and demonstrating the appropriate knowledge and skills on the exam. Students using this method risked peer pressure, particularly if they were quite successful. The second way in which to achieve a good test score was to "cheat." These students risked being

caught. And a third method involved bargaining away the test altogether, thereby lessening the impact of test scores on the final grade. These students risked never knowing if they had learned anything.

Achieving a Good Grade through Efficient Studying

The ability of the two Hispanic students to demonstrate the proficiency that they had developed prior to enrollment in this class was discussed in the previous section. The rest of the students, however, needed to rely on other methods to achieve good test scores.

Barbara Evans, a graduating senior, demonstrated a well-developed skill in obtaining information that would prepare her for tests and quizzes. Barbara expressed in an early interview that grades were extremely important to her, as she wanted to attend a prestigous university, and her grade point average would be scrutinized carefully by admissions officers. It was characteristic of Barbara to seek information about tests in order to efficiently narrow the scope of what needed to be reviewed in order to do well. The day before the test on Unit 11, for example, Barbara asked a series of questions that dealt with the form and scope of the test as much as with the skills it was to measure:

> Do we have to read all of them? [diaries in the chapter?]
>
> Do you have to write yo /I/.
>
> Are you going to have questions like this?
>
> Do we get marked down if we don't put Pilar?
>
> Are accents counted?

Can we have a little sample test?

Occasionally Barbara would interrupt a class activity in order to press on to a test review that would be specific, and it was not at all unusual for Barbara to inquire if Mrs. Kraft would be returning graded examinations promptly. Although she did not have Mrs. Kraft first semester, Barbara did have prior experience in introductory Spanish at the junior high school level. This, coupled with her sharp study skills, apparently helped her to do well on tests. After a 60% on her first unit exam, she steadily improved and most regularly received test grades in the eighties. Correspondingly, her marking period grades consisted of two Bs and one A.

There was risk, however, in achieving tests scores that were too high as a result of studing. The culture code subtly appeared to forbid a student to look like he/she were trying too hard and succeeding in attaining high test scores. Mike and Glenda seemed to be most at risk in this class.

Mike appeared to downplay or hide any overt successes he earned. He was one of a group of students who entered Mrs. Kraft's section from Mr. MacNamara's. Perhaps because he was a competing athlete, Mike was taken in as a part of this class' social group that roughly included Jack, Trevor and Don. Enrolled in advanced placement classes in some of his other courses, Mike appeared to be a very conscientious student--the only one I observed taking notes and attempting to study conjugations. His quiz grades were excellent--evidence that he was picking up the vocabulary. He did well on tests, but seemed to be laboring over them, and was usually one of the last to turn in his paper. At the end

of the second unit test it appeared that his progress was resented--at least by Don. Mike turned in his paper and returned to his seat:

Don: (from across the room) Mike, did you get the test done?

Mike: (seated and looking in the glossary) Yea.

Don: (mouths to Mike who is not looking at him) Mike, f--- you.

When the same test was returned, Don received an 87%:

Don: (To Mike) Whadja get?

Mike: (Holding up his paper with a 95% and smiling) I studied.

Don: Shut up, you didn't.

By the second half of the course, however, Mike was subtly avoiding talking about his own tests scores:

Don: How'd you do? (Holding up his own paper)

Mike laughs, but doesn't reveal his own score.

Glenda, likewise, had to fend off the pressure of success. She had studied with Mrs. Kraft first semester. It was against her test grades that the more competitive students measured their own scores:

As the first unit test was returned, Alonso immediately began to compare his grade with those of others near him. He asks Glenda for her paper. She passes it to him.

Alonso: 74 out of 75! Why do you study for it, huh?

Her lowest score was 94%, and she appeared to pick up the required information and skills effortlessly. Even though she remained pretty

much alone socially, she apparently avoided criticism by showing her willingness to serve as a stategic resource--helping others out with worksheets and quizzes:

Glenda: I help a lot of other people.

Me: Why do you do that?

Glenda: I dunno. I figure if I know it, and they're confused, I can maybe help 'em [inaudible].

Me: So, it's kinda like a peer teaching or helping.

(a minute later, she continued)

Glenda: People ask me for answers on the tests.

Me: And how do you feel about that?

Glenda: I don't--I don't like doing it.

Me: What do you do to avoid that?

Glenda: I don't do it on major tests, definitely, but like on a quiz or something like that I give somebody an idea.

Achieving a Good Grade by "Cheating"

And, indeed, another method used to achieve good test scores was cheating. Based on data in my fieldnotes and interviews, I would estimate that approximately half of the students in this class were not completely academically honest in the achievement of their test grades. Of the sixteen underclassmen surveyed at the end of the school year (see Appendix A) nine indicated that they tried to succeed while being academically honest. And at least one member of that group was observed by me and by another student copying test answers. Although, according to students, the practice of cheating was rather commonplace throughout the school culture, there was still a stigma attached to it.

Some students monitored Mrs. Kraft and me very carefully during test periods, their eyes routinely checking ours before moving to another student's work or to a pre-prepared piece of paper tucked among their belongings. Other students watched me very carefully at first, and then, apparently convinced that I would maintain their confidentiality, proceeded to cheat as I documented the procedure.

Certainly not naive, Mrs. Kraft showed evidence of monitoring for cheating, and, indeed, reported to me that she was suspicious of certain students' test scores, but, without evidence, she felt there was little she could do but consider other variables in the determination of the grade.

Probably the most blatant consumer of others' answers was Don. In an individual interview, he expressed to me his feelings about cheating:

Me: Some people call that [using other people's answers and collaborating] cheating.

Don: (after 3 seconds) I probly call it cheating too.

Me: Would you call it cheating too? Why?

Don: I would. 'Cause I think if I wanted to take the time out, ya know, to learn it, ya know, I wouldn't have ta ask, ya know, ask somebody for their paper or something. I'd just learn it on my own, if I really try hard enough and wanted to learn the language. But, I dunno--(2 seconds)

Me: But you don't--

Don: Not really.

Me: So you call it cheating. Do you feel like a cheater or--

Don: I feel guilty when I do it. I feel guilty inside--yea--for doing it.

Me: Why?

Don: 'Cause I know it's wrong.

Me: Why?

Don: (after 3 seconds) 'Cause I know I shouldn't do that--I know that. (laugh)

Me: Do other people do it?

Don: Yea.

Me: Is it wrong for them?

Don: It's wrong for everybody to cheat.

Apparently, however, the guilt was not enough to stop Don. He relied on Alonso consistently:

Me: Like on a quiz--how much do you put in on your own before you go to Alonso's paper to see--

Don: Ah--let's see--on a quiz?

Me: Yea. A quiz or a test or an exercise--

Don: Like what do you want me to say--like--

Me: I dunno. I mean how much--how much of that paper that you turned in his your own work and how much is Alonso's work?

Don: Geez--

Me: --or does it depend on the exercise?

Don: Most of it is Alonso's work. (laugh)

Don seemed somewhat baffled that Mrs. Kraft had not determined that the test papers he turned in did not reflect his level of achievement:

Me: Do you think that she knows that you're not turning in your own work?

Don: (after 3 seconds) Maybe. (laugh) I really don't know. Well--(another 3 seconds)

Me: I haven't said anything.

Don: I really don't know--maybe she does--maybe she doesn't--I dunno.

Me: You're just not sure. Do you think it would make a difference to her?

Don: (after 3 seconds) Pardon?

Me: Do you think it would make a difference to her?

Don: Yea.

Me: You do. If she--

Don: She probly knows, like what kinda work I do compared to Alfonso [sic]. And if, like, if she knows--like 'cause sometimes like in Spanish One, I just used to write little sentences--and when I copied off somebody else, then I'd have, like, a big, long sentence or something I didn't even know what it meant.

Me: I see.

Don: Ya know. That's how she might know the difference. I dunno.

Other students were aware that Don copied test answers, and Tracey, in particular, seemed anxious to expose him. Fieldnotes record that one day when Mrs. Kraft was helping the class to write compositions, Tracey verified her suspicions:

> Tracey gets up and goes to Mrs. Kraft's desk and opens the gradebook. After closing it and pulling some papers over it, she returns to her seat saying to Don, "Like I say, you cheat!"

But, indeed, it appeared that Mrs. Kraft didn't suspect Don of cheating. Particularly at the beginning of the term, she referred to him as a "good student." His test papers generally mirrored Alonso's (see Figures 5 and 6), and his test grades were excellent. With the exception of his performance on the individual oral part of the final (60%), his test grades were never below a 76% and were most frequently in the eighties and nineties. Don received a mark of A for each of the three grading periods and an A for the semester.

Bargaining away the Impact of the Test Score

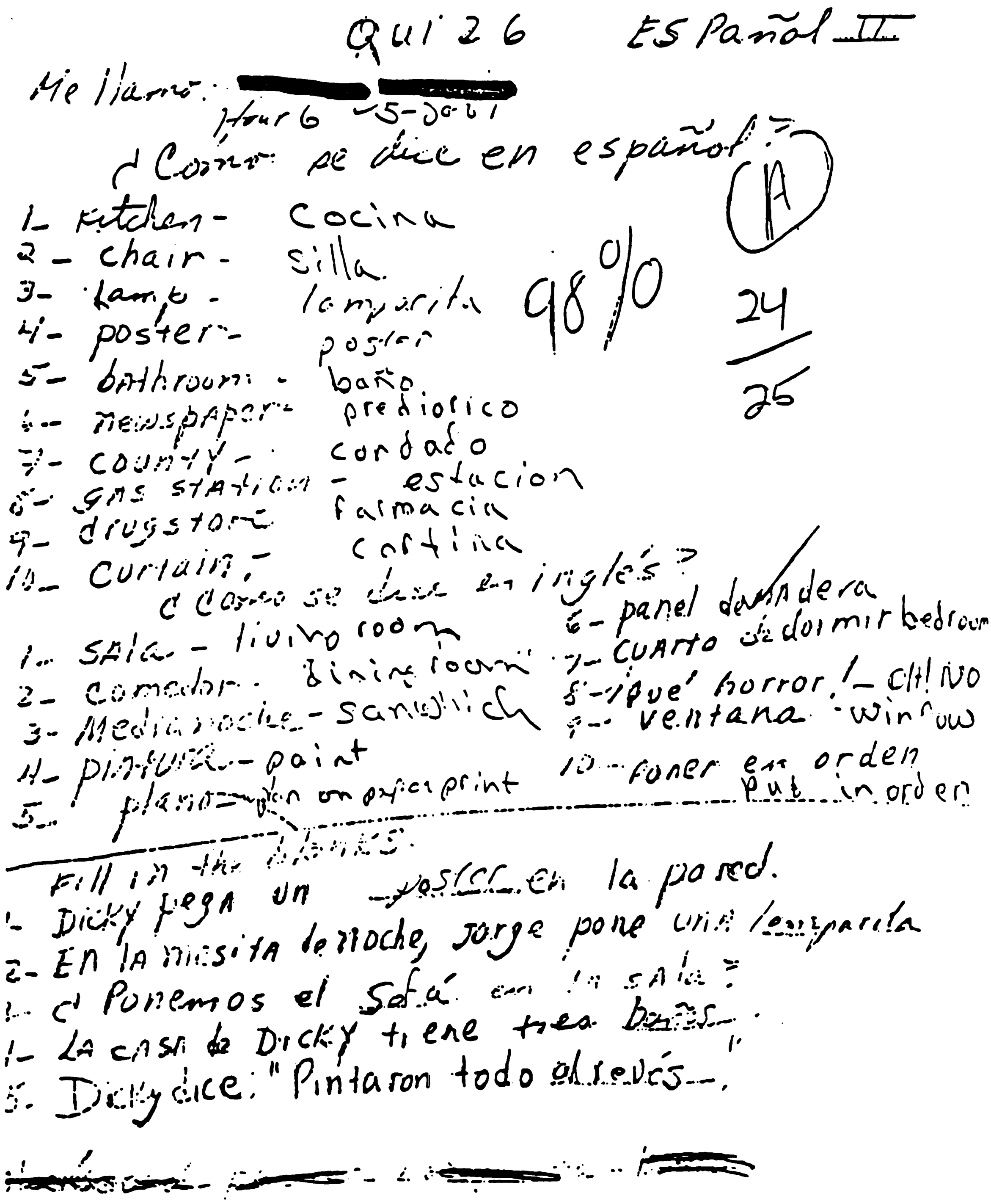
The last method of dealing with test scores was a type of bargaining which had the net effect of lessening the impact of a measured level of achievement on the final grade. The "bargain," as discussed in the professional literature (Cusick, 1973, 1983; Sykes, 1984; Lightfoot, 1983; Sizer, 1984), was strongly resisted by Mrs. Kraft in this particular classroom. According to students, it was prevalent in other classes, however.

Michelle: He gave us, ya know, that vocabulary test but he didn't give us unit tests, ya know, like Mrs. Kraft, and he hardly gave us quizzes. If he gave us quizzes, he would put 'em off, or the class, itself, would make him put off.

Me: How would that happen?

Michelle: Well, some people would say that, ah, they weren't ready for it. They weren't ready for the quiz. They weren't ready for the test. Or not very many people showed up or somethin' like that.

Me: People just didn't come?



Quiz 26 Español II

Me llamo: [redacted]

Hour 6 5-20-01

¿Como se dice en español?

1- kitchen - cocina
2 - chair - silla
3- lamp - lamparita
4- poster - poster
5- bathroom - baño
6- newspaper - prediorico
7- county - cordado
8- gas station - estacion
9- drugstore farmacia
10- curtain - cortina

98% A 24/25

¿Como se dice en inglés?

1- sala - livivo room
2- comedor - dining room
3- Medianoche - sandwich
4- pintura - paint
5- plano - plan on paper print
6- panel de madera
7- cuarto de dormir bedroom
8- ¡que horror! - Oh! No
9- ventana - window
10- poner en orden put in orden

Fill in the blanks

1- Dicky pega un poster en la pared.
2- En la mesita de noche, Jorge pone una lamparita
3- ¿Ponemos el sofá en la sala?
4- La casa de Dicky tiene tres baños.
5. Dicky dice: "Pintaron todo al revés."

Figure 5. Sample of Alonso's Quiz 26.

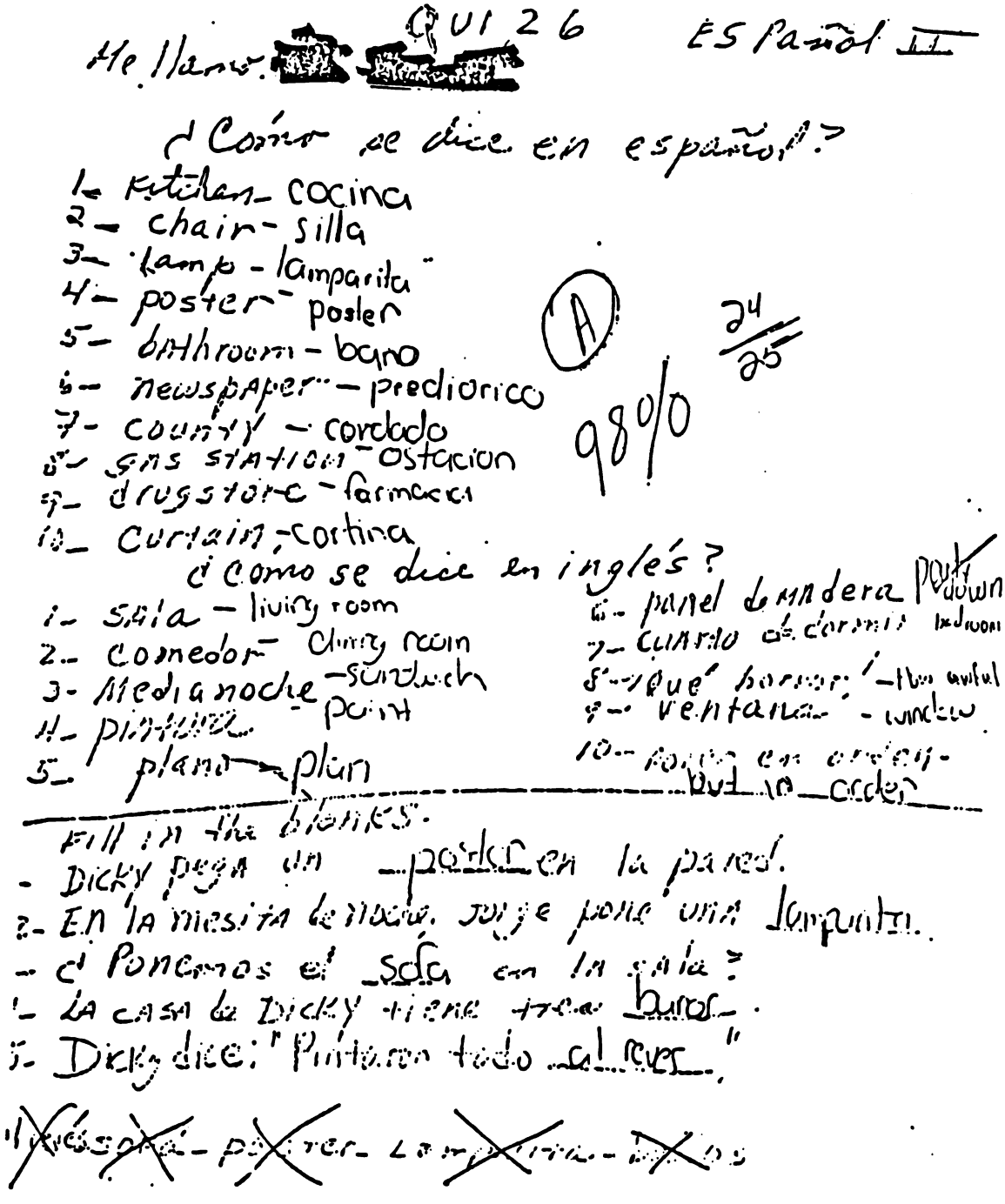


Figure 6. Sample of Don's Quiz 26.

Michelle: Well, people came, but maybe about four or five would skip that day and stuff like that, and then the other people that were there would say that ya know--

Tracey: They were sick or somethin'--they'd have to go--

Michelle: Why should we take it when they're not here, or why should we take it when we're not ready for it.

Tracey: Yea.

It was apparent that a group of students came to Mrs. Kraft's section from a Spanish I experience in which bargaining away measureable achievement was the norm. It was, likewise, apparent that Mrs. Kraft was a shrewd bargainer who set and generally held the line. This didn't stop students from habitually trying, however, and from achieving a couple of small "deals."

1:20
Mrs K: O.K, now I'm going to give you the test. After you finish--

A student requests 5 minutes to study.

Mrs.K: You want five minutes to study? You had time to study-You want five minutes to study and we start at twenty- five after? I'll give you five minutes...

1:25
Mrs.K: O.K. time's up, so please put your books away, <u>por favor</u> /please/.

Before class on one of the test days in February, Mrs. Kraft approached me, anxious to tell me about a "compromise" she had made with students the day before. She said that there were several students from Mr. MacNamara's class who reportedly said they didn't know the basic verbs from last term. Apparently frustrated with the

heterogeneity in background, she had agreed to go ahead with the exam, but also provide a sheet with those verbs for use during the test. Very conscious of being fair, she said all students, in both of her sections, would have access to the sheet (see Figure 7). It was interesting to note, however, that not all students needed or wanted the compromise.

Mrs.K: Note that I'm giving you the information I promised yesterday...formula and forms of those words.

Alice: (Mrs. Kraft passes the sheets) I don't need it.

It became clear, then, that tests would be given, would measure a variety of skills, and would be counted, and that bargaining in this area of the grade determination was limited.

Homework--A Measure of "Trying"

The grade in this class was determined not only by apparent achievement based on test scores, but also on a complicated series of understandings that involved how hard a student was "trying" to succeed. If, indeed, high tests scores assured a high grade, the opposite was not true. One could have low test scores and not receive a low grade. It seemed to be the case that, a student who showed evidence of trying would not fail. This understanding seemed to permeate schoolwide. Of the twelve items listed on the Memorandum to Parents (see Appendix D) only one mentioned low test scores on periodic quizzes as a reason for failure. The other eleven dealt with evidence that the student was not "trying" to succeed.

ESPAÑOL II

Ir + A + Infinitive

Forms of the verb Ir = to go

yo voy		nosotros	vamos
tú vas			
él, ella, usted	va	ellos, ellas, ustedes	van

Forms of the verb estar = to be

yo estoy		nosotros	estamos
tú estás			
él, ella, usted	está	ellos, ellas, ustedes	están

Present Participle

ando iendo

Figure 7. Sheet with Verbs for Use during Exam.

In this classroom, homework appeared to be a key variable in the determination of a final grade. It was the most frequently mentioned "trying" factor that was easily measureable.

Mrs. Kraft assigned homework on an average of twice a week. The typical assignment involved the completion of one or two exercises in the textbook. She wrote the assignment on the board with the daily greeting. For example:

> Buenas tardes! /Good afternoon!/ Hoy es lunes 27 de abril de 1987 /Today is April 27/ tarea para mañana pág. 131 exercise #10. /homework for tomorrow page 131, exercise #10./ Please write the complete sentence.

It was evident that homework did not consume a great deal of time or effort on the part of students. Although Don indicated that he spent approximately "15-20 minutes at the most" per day studying Spanish, that appeared to be a generous estimate. Several students indicated that they completed all of their homework in class. Most students reported that the assignments were not particularly challenging.

Trevor: Well, homework is easy.

Me: Why is that?

Trevor: I dunno. It's just all the answers are right in front of you and I just--I do all my homework. Homework's pretty easy.

Me: So you turn in all your homework?

Trevor: Oh, yea.

Me: How long does it take you to do?

Trevor: 'Bout five minutes. (laugh) Five to ten minutes. Something like that. Pretty easy.

Although the homework assignments were explained in class and did not appear to be too challenging, Mrs. Kraft did ask students to re-do assignments that were unacceptably completed. She did so with Solita, asking her to repeat an assignment that was copied from another student; and Mrs. Kraft also asked Trevor to re-do assignments that were not completed as directed.

And even though Mrs. Kraft explicitly stated at the beginning of the term that homework was due at the first part of the hour, she was very liberal in that regard and accepted assignments any time before the end of the term.

It was explicit that homework was an important part of the grade. After the first exam, Mrs. Kraft indicated that she counted it as 25%. It appeared to be variable, however, as for some students it seemed to count considerably more. By the end of the first few weeks Mrs. Kraft had made it clear that completed homework bolstered unsteady test grades.

Mrs.K: (preparing to hand back tests) I want you to know, like I told you, you get points for your test. Under 60% doesn't make it, but you can make it up with two other tests. The most important thing--homework--some haven't done.

Mrs. Kraft periodically spoke to the class about the importance of completing homework. During the ninth week:

Mrs.K: There was a great number who didn't turn in homework yesterday. You still have time. Homework is important in every way--for your learning experience and for your grade.

Likewise, students seemed to understand that homework was an important part of showing that they were trying.

> Me: Is homework a big part of showing her you're trying?
>
> Ellen: Yea, 'cause if you don't do your homework, then she'll say you're not trying, and then that'll bring your grade way down.

In fact, it appeared that, at least in this setting, homework did not bring a grade way down, but the lack of completed homework assignments allowed the grade to slip closer to the level of already low test scores. Its lack almost appeared to permit the teacher to give a low grade, since not only was the student not achieving, he/she was not even trying. This seemed to be the case with Solita. My fieldnotes record a discussion with Mrs. Kraft at the end of the first marking period.

> After class Mrs. Kraft said Solita was mad that she failed, but that Mrs. Kraft couldn't justify passing her with failing test grades and a total of only two or three homeworks. [out of 12]

Likewise, at the end of the semester, fieldnotes indicate that a lack of homework affected Mrs. Kraft's determination of Tracey's grade:

> Mrs. Kraft told me at the end of the final exam period that Tracey would get a B for the semester because she had good test scores, but no homework, and that "was sacred."

The gradebook indicated, however, that Tracey did not have test scores that, alone, would have given her a higher grade. Her test scores throughout the term had, in fact, steadily slipped and before the final were in the sixties.

On the other hand, the presence of completed homework appeared to signal that the student was "trying." Such evidence not only apparently prevented the teacher from failing the student, but likewise, permitted raising the grade considerably above the level of the test score average. For example, after Solita's failure in the first marking period, she apparently recognized the importance of homework. She turned in all of it, and even though Mrs. Kraft was somewhat suspicious of Solita's improving test scores (52%, 32%, 68%, 78%), she didn't once again say that Solita wasn't trying.

Mrs.K: She did (3 seconds), she did fairly well in the test, and I wonder what happened.

Me: What do you think happened?

Mrs.K: I dunno. (3 seconds) I'm glad. She ended up with a C.

Me: Yea. I heard her say that. She seemed real pleased.

Mrs.K: Which comes all the way up.

Me: Yea. You said she's been turning in homework and stuff.

Mrs.K: She's been turning in homework, and that helped her grade to go up.

Mrs. Kraft seemed to consider Barbara's perfect homework record, as well, for the second marking period. Although her quiz and test scores were not particularly high (96%, 85%, 76%, 77%), she received an A and was characterized by Mrs. Kraft as a student who "tries."

Mrs.K: I think that Barbara wanted to get something out.

Me: Get something out? How come--well, how would you say that?

Mrs.K: She gives me that impression. She tries hard and she felt like she was at a disadvantage because she came from the other class that the teacher had a different style.

Me: Right.

Mrs.K: And she--I mean she did very, very well this time. She got an A for the second marking period.

Me: Was she pleased?

Mrs.K: She was very pleased, but she deserved it. She's worked hard. She always turns in her homework.

Me: Is that a big part? When you look at--and make a grade on effort--

Mrs.K: The effort--the effort, really. It's not so much--her work--her work is far from perfect--and it's not perfect, but she tries.

Homework, then, was a key measureable variable in the determination of a final grade. It's absence appeared to signal that the student was not "trying" to succeed; its presence indicated, at least in part, that the student was "trying." And in this class, students, by and large, did turn in their homework regularly, at least according to gradebook notations.

Class Participation

The third variable that entered into the determination of the marking period grade was called class participation. Mrs. Kraft indicated that it was worth 30% of the marking period grade. As she returned the first unit exams, she described class participation:

Mrs.K: You know how important I think class participation is...It includes answering questions--right or wrong--

that doesn't matter, doing your class work, bringing your book and those things.

Like homework, class participation was an indication of "trying." It appeared to have multiple definitions within both the school and classroom cultures, but had at least four identifiable components including: asking and answering questions, following acceptable norms for classroom behavior, attendance, and the completion of tangible classroom assignments. They all need to be considered here as a part of "trying to get the grade."

Asking and Answering Questions

As was discussed in Chapter V, Mrs. Kraft was most anxious for students to communicate in Spanish, and was explicit in her desire for students to use words as liberally as possible. Therefore, students were not penalized for wrong answers, but rather gently corrected.

Some students, however, seemed to define class participation in terms of asking questions.

Me: [Suppose I said] Look at this person, at this group, and tell me which ones are trying.

Doug: The ones that are participating.

Me: Participating, O.K..

Sara: Asking questions.

Me: O.K. Asking questions. About what?

Sara: If they don't understand what she was talking about or if she was explaining it--you go back and ask her a question about it if you don't understand something that she said, er--

Doug: It also has to do with a measure of honesty in the student. You can ask questions about meaning and not care to know the answer. That happens all the time.

Me: O.K. Give me an example of that.

Doug: Student X or--

Me: Yea, yea. Not a name. Yea. Student X. How can Student X ask a question and really not want to know the answer?

Doug: The student, to give the appearance that he is actually doing work, you know, to get the grade will, will, you know pay attention as much as he has to and--

Alonso: Yea. Yea.

Doug: --Ask questions every once in a while.

Me: Is that, I mean, something that would make sense to you. I mean you've seen that or would say--

Alonso: Lots of times.

Me: Lots of times you've seen that. Why, then, would the student want to do that?

Alonso: To get by in the grade.

Doug: Yea.

Alonso: To [acquire] language--um--credit.

Of the sixteen students informally surveyed at the end of the course (see Appendix A), only five indicated that they asked questions in class when they didn't understand something. Likewise, fieldnotes indicate that asking questions about content was not very common. More frequently, however, students did ask questions that seemed to give the appearance that they were "trying." As previously mentioned, Albert Perez was exceptionally quiet, and characteristically compliant and competent, but one of the only times he initiated any form of com-

munication was apparently to demonstrate to Mrs. Kraft that he was on task. Fieldnotes record the sequence:

> 1:30
> Albert and Lucinda now are the only ones not on task [an exercise dealing with diminutives]. They are carefully examining and exchanging coins. They smile at each other--talking soundlessly. At one point, Albert appears to want to return a coin to Lucinda, but failing to get her eye contact, he chooses not to make a sound for her attention. He waits. Meanwhile, Mrs. Kraft moves toward his side of the room, stopping to answer a question for Charu.
>
> 1:37
> Albert raises his hand and asks a question about the exercise.
>
> Mrs.K: (to Barbara) These [referring to the diminutives] are fun!
>
> Solita: They're easy!

For an exercise that had been understood and was being completed by even the most resistant students, it appeared that Albert asked the question to legitimize his empty paper as Mrs. Kraft moved closer.

Asking questions, whether one really wanted or needed an answer, then, was one way to appear to be interested in the class. It was an accepted norm to show one was "trying."

Following Accepted Norms for Classroom Behavior

Another factor that seemed to fall under the heading of participation was general classroom behavior. In interviews, students mentioned this as a determinant of who could be identified as "trying."

> Me: If someone says to me, pick out the students in this class who are trying [3 seconds], how would I know?
>
> Jack: Quiet ones.

Rob: Not necessarily.

Me: Rob says 'not necessarily.' (laugh) O.K.

Mike: Who aren't goofing off.

Jack: Well, yea, like people, like, like Don and Trevor.

(Mercedes continued seconds later)

Mercedes: Who doesn't give the teacher much trouble.

Jack: Yea--or they, ya know, they, ya know, sit in class and they do most of the work and they don't give the teacher a hard time.

On the other end of the continuum, students identified extremely passive behavior as unacceptable.

Me: [If I came to pick out the kids who are trying] How would I know? Could you describe that?

Linda: Well, if you're, ya know, basically, if you're like sleeping in class, you're not trying very much.

Interestingly, students were often able to justify their own behavior as acceptable. Linda continued:

Me: If you're awake, you're trying--Is that it?

Linda: And if you're talking all the time, like I do (laugh), you know.

Me: Is that an example?

Linda: I talk a lot.

Me: Is that--

Linda: I do, I just, but I can listen and talk at the same time. Like, I mean if you can tell if they're not listening. Like, if they ask you a question and you're not--and you don't know where you are or anything, then you're not really listening. But if they ask you and you know exactly where you are and can answer it, then I guess you can talk at the same time. It's all right.

Mrs. Kraft recognized that she occasionally used the grade to serve as leverage in the management of classroom behavior, but that this required a delicate balance with her desire to have the class feel safe enough to "try to communicate." She compared her sixth and seventh hour classes.

> Well, see, I did the same [in both classes]. I pounded. I had to make work harder. I had to 7th hour. But I did the same listenings, I did the same oral practice, but I had to probe more into them, ya know. I would get more answers like 'I dunno' or that sort of thing and then I would have to get to my--I said. 'Well, no classroom participation for a person that doesn't try--no classroom participation.' But see, I would have to resort to that to make them do something. But see, with this group, they gave it to me without--I tried to make them at ease so they didn't have to worry...It [sixth hour] was very cooperative, but this other group, because of the behavior problems of these kids, I didn't have--...[but] Solita was somewhat like that. Solita gave me a hard time some of these days--except that I had to r-e-a-l-l-y get onto her.

It appeared, then, that the teacher in this setting attempted to modify student behavior to prevent disruption and to encourage an acceptable pattern of classroom communication. She occasionally used the grade as leverage to do this.

Attendance

The school culture was visibly involved in the administration of attendance policy, and was instrumental in establishing the relationship between attendance and grades. The Student Handbook was explicit, stating:

> We feel that attendance in all classes is fundamental to the learning process. We do not question those absences called in by parents; however, each course description contains an attendance statement requiring that students must attend 85% of total class

> sessions. Attendance below 85% in any class may result in reduction of academic grade due to work not made up or failure to participate in a class activity which cannot be made up.

Likewise, Mrs. Kraft was clear in her course outline (see Appendix C) that she strictly adhered to this attendance policy.

In this classroom, only one student failed for the semester, and her attendance record showed a significant number of absences. Darlene Smith, a senior, failed the first grading period. She had all failing test scores, turned in only three of twelve homework assignments, and missed seven class periods, which constituted less than the 85% attendance rate mentioned in the Student Handbook. Mrs. Kraft continued to encourage her, however, ignoring her chewing gum, lending her the teacher's edition of the textbook, and helping her to answer questions. Two weeks into the second term, Darlene began to put her head down in class. Mrs. Kraft excused her to the nurse once, and encouraged her to stay awake on another occasion. On March 18:

> Mrs. Kraft gives Darlene a permission slip for the field trip and asks her to have her parents sign it. A minute or two later Darlene apparently asks for a pass to the clinic, and Mrs. Kraft says no. Darlene says, "I'm sick. I'm pregnant." Without a pass she leaves the room.

Darlene returned for only a few more classes for the remainder of the term. Mrs. Kraft expressed her frustration:

> If a person tries, I believe that person should be given a chance. But, see, Darlene has got a lot of problems now. Darlene hasn't come to class. I think she is going to be either suspended or--I don't know what her status is going to be, but when she wasn't in class, she didn't make a-n-y attempts to make up the work. She didn't make any attempts to, um, to make arrangements to take the test at some other time...She cannot concentrate on school. So

there was no way that I could have any basis to grade Darlene on anything. She didn't try anything.

Although Darlene was the only example of a student who had an exceptionally poor attendance record in this class, Mrs. Kraft reported that the problem was more significant in her seventh hour section. Just as one could quickly pick out the A students by a glance at their test score grades, one could just as easily identify failures in that section's class list by the significant number of absences recorded next to their names. Indeed, if getting good test scores was the surest way to a good grade--compiling a poor attendance record appeared to be a good way to fail.

Completing Assignments--The Paper Chase

One of the most obvious rituals in this class was the apparent exchange of "paper" for credit toward a grade. Paradoxically, it appeared that the students most disengaged from efforts to communicate, were most concerned about turning in written assignments. Indeed, such tangible efforts were construed as "trying" or "making an effort." And, likewise, they were described by students as keeping up with the "workload" of the class.

Nearly every day Mrs. Kraft had a type of activity that involved writing. These exercises fell into several categories: listening exercises in which students simply marked a correct response; composition practice in which students described a picture or used vocabulary in context to answer questions; and vocabulary/structure exercises that

were characteriscially in the form of a "packet." These exercises came from workbook pages designed by the textbook publisher.

Students corrected their own listening exercises, and occasionally used their responses to written questions as a basis for oral practice with the same information. Other exercises were collected upon completion by Mrs. Kraft, reviewed by her, and returned to the students for future reference. She was explicit that these ungraded written pages constituted class participation and could be exchanged for credit.

Mrs.K: (returning papers) Some of you did not turn in papers yesterday. Also, if you don't give me stuff in class, I can't give you credit.

On another occasion, Mrs. Kraft reminded students that she needed their papers to assign credit.

Mrs.K: (reminding students to put their names on their papers) I give credit for your classwork.

Students seemed anxious to turn in anything that was complete enough for credit.

1:53
There appears to be a sense of urgency to finish the exercise--particularly among Trevor, Don and Alonso who seem anxious to turn in their sheets.

Trevor: Are we supposed to pass these up? (He holds up his paper--there is scribbling all over the back.)

Mrs.K: Everybody gets credit. I know who does the work and who doesn't.

The paperwork was not graded, and students frequently helped one another. Mrs. Kraft encouraged the use of the text. The line between "helping one another to understand" and "helping one another to finish" was not clear--but it seemed evident that most students were interested in simply filling in the page as effortlessly as possible. Fieldnotes show that students often handed their work to others who copied and returned it. This was particularly evident when there was a substitute teacher in charge of the class.

> Rob, Ellen and Sara seem to be sharing papers. Glenda holds up her paper for Sara. A minute later Rob passes his paper to Sara.

There did not appear to be as great a stigma attached to sharing classwork answers as to sharing test answers, but students seemed to be careful that they were not caught. Sara and Don were typical.

> Sara finished copying Ellen's packet, straightens the pages, looks at me, waits several seconds, then returns the packet to Ellen.

and

> Don turns and asks Albert for his paper. Albert gives it to him. Don smiles, takes it, and appears to copy the answers. His eyes look to Mrs. Kraft every time she moves, even slightly.

On one occasion when Glenda apparently noticed that Rob was one whole packet behind, she offered to fill part of it in for him, saving the copying time.

> Alonso, having finished both packets has not done much but look around all hour. Glenda, also finished, reads a novel and apparently offers to complete Rob's paper for him. She fills in a section or two and returns it to him as he works on the second packet.

It appeared, then, that class participation involved turning in something tangible that could be examined and returned for apparent credit toward a grade. Filling in the paper was one sign that a student was "trying."

Extra Credit

The final formal variable in the determination of the grade was called "extra credit." There were apparently two ways to achieve extra credit. The first was to turn in a project, and the second involved participation in Spanish Club activities.

The extra credit project was described in the course outline (see Appendix C):

> Students may earn a maximum of 15 extra credit points per marking period if:
>
> a) The student prepares an extra credit project description form (I will give you these) and submits it to the teacher at least three weeks before the end of the marking period.
>
> b) The project receives teacher approval.
>
> c) The work is submitted one week before the end of the marking period. Late extra credit projects will not be accepted.

Although not mentioned in the course outline, Mrs. Kraft announced at the beginning of the third week that participation in Spanish Club would result in extra credit.

> Mrs. Kraft calls attention to the announcement on the board about Spanish Club meeting at 7:30 A.M. on February 5. "I always give extra credit to those who come."

The first mention by a student of extra credit that I recorded was during the fifth week when Mrs. Kraft was discussing grades for the first marking period.

Mrs.K: I have points, not letter grades. All points count... then I average in homework and class participation.

Trevor laughs nervously as he mentions the low test score grades by his name in the gradebook.

Mrs.K: You are failing.

Trevor: Mrs. Kraft, you can't fail me.

Mrs.K: You'll fail yourself.

Trevor: I'm doing all the junk and the tests.

Mrs.K: You are not working this term. I know you can do it.

Trevor: This is hard, Mrs. Kraft. (He asks for extra work to do at home.)

Apparently, however, Trevor was not interested in putting too much effort into extra credit.

Mrs.K: I give extra credit for attending Spanish Club.

Trevor: I haven't left the house by 7:30.

Mrs. Kraft says she sees many students at school by 7:30, then continues--

Mrs.K: There are other things you can do for extra credit such as writing reports or doing research...You have to give me a proposal and I'll see if it's worth it.

Trevor inquires if it has to be written in Spanish.

Mrs.K: I don't expect it in Spanish, since you are not at that level. You can choose a country. Maybe present a report to the class. I had a student who talked about Mexico and used slides, etc....It added something to the class.

Trevor doesn't respond.

One day during the final marking period, Mrs. Kraft expressed concern to me about Trevor's grade. She said he wasn't passing and recalled an incident the day before during a class exercise:

Mrs.K: O.K. Now we're caught up.

Trevor: No, we're not.

Linda: Wait a minute. I'm not done yet [after 15 seconds] pintar /to paint./

Trevor: p-i-n-t-a-r?

Mrs.K: Listen to her.

Trevor makes a characteristic "put upon" expression.

Mrs.K: Trevor, there's a certain amount of work that is involved in going to school.

Trevor: Really?

Class: Ooooh!

Mrs.K: So remember that.

Trevor raises his eyes only to look at her.

Mrs. Kraft indicated that she had decided after this incident to assign Trevor an extra credit project in which he would write reports on three countries. She said that she would call his parents and

confirm the assignment with them. It was, she said, the only way he could "make it."

Two class periods later Mrs. Kraft brought up extra credit with the entire class.

Mrs.K: If you have decided to do extra credit projects, let me know. Some of you will have to.

Trevor: Mrs. Kraft, I'm going to. (He repeats this three times.) Can you just pick a Spanish-speaking city and, like, write about it?

Mrs. Kraft says it should be a country and that reports should be a minimum of two pages and, if not typed, it has to be legible.

Apparently, Trevor did complete the extra credit project as assigned and he handed it in the day of the final exam--after asking for a pass to go get it from his locker. He received 40 extra credit points for his effort.

Likewise, Mrs. Kraft mentioned at the end of the final that she realized Sara "was weak," but added, "She came to every Spanish Club meeting." The gradebook showed 10 extra credit points by her name.

And although Trevor was the most visible in his pursuit of extra credit, the gradebook shows that 12 of the 23 students in the class got extra credit points--ranging from 10 points to 40.

All in all, then, it appeared that "trying to get the grade" was a complicated effort involving the consideration and weighing of four explicit variables, including test scores, homework, class participation and extra credit. And although grades are traditionally associated with achievement, data from this study suggest that a grade may or may not reflect a measureable amount of achievement or pro-

ficiency in language learning. It may, rather, reflect for some students the degree to which they apparently "tried" to succeed.

CHAPTER SEVEN:
THE CLASSROOM AND THE SCHOOL CULTURE:
CHECKS AND BALANCES

Introduction

Although the motivations and behaviors of the participants in this classroom have been discussed, it is important, too, to examine the specific influence of the school culture on the transactions that took place in this setting. This classroom was not an island, but was connected at various points both to the school and the community. What one was able or willing to do in the classroom, then, depended in large part on checks and balances from a variety of constituencies. Both teacher and students appeared to be bound into this system in at least two areas. The first was the "workload" that the participants might reasonably expect to put into a foreign language class. The second was the "knowledge load" that participants might reasonably expect to take out of the learning experience. These terms, themselves, were used by students when comparing this class to others in the school culture.

Doug: What do you mean by hard? Do you mean workload or knowledge load?

Me: I don't know.

Doug: Because there's a big difference.

Me: O.K. What is the difference, then?

Doug: Well, workload is just paperwork, you know, bookwork. Knowledge load is how much you're actually expected to know.

These factors overlapped both the motivation of the teacher to encourage communication and the motivation of the students to achieve an acceptable grade.

The Workload

The workload in this class involved not only paperwork but the amount of oral communication practice in Spanish that could reasonably be expected. It appears that both were adjusted to fit into the organizational norms.

On two separate occasions Mrs. Briggs, Sara's mother, mentioned a difference in the amount of Spanish used in the classroom between first and second semesters. On February 4, I called Mrs. Briggs about the Participation Agreement.

> Sara's mother said she had already signed the form. She said Sara was glad I was in the class this term. She felt my presence and the new students this semester caused Mrs. Kraft to slow down and not speak only Spanish.

She repeated Sara's observation again during an interview at the end of the semester.

Mrs. Kraft was aware that she used decreasingly less Spanish in the classroom. As mentioned in Part II, she had strongly felt the resistance to communication in Spanish. Particularly when the new students entered second semester with virtually no oral skills, she felt she had begun to give in to a new wave of resistance. In our

final interview she expressed resolve to use more Spanish in the classroom for the Spanish III and IV sections she was assigned to teach.

Mrs.K: You see what I would like to do with the second year--I would like to train them from the beginning since I will have a group, hopefully, that's more interested as far as their going to the second year. I would like to really use a lot of Spanish in the classroom--get them really used to that. Like I will give them a list. You know, I used a lot of classroom directions, and so many times I had to go back to English more than I really liked to.

And, apparently, the workload in terms of paperwork had also been adjusted between first and second semesters. Rob Gomez described the difference.

Me: ...As far as workload is concerned in this class would you say this is a heavy class for work--

Rob: No.

Me: No?

Rob: Not compared to the first semester which was--

Me: The first semester was much different? How was the first semester different?

Rob: She had--Mrs. Kraft always gave, like, packets-packets every day--expecting us to have them done. She's, ya know, she had ta lighten up a lot, ya know. Before it was like eight pac--pages a day...

Me: You said she had to lighten up. Who made her lighten up? (laugh) Who makes a teacher lighten up?

Rob: Well, I don't--I think maybe she did it herself. I mean 'cause a couple kids last year were complaining a lot and that was her first year really teaching here at Memorial.

And, indeed, the word about the workload assigned first semester by the new teacher had spread around the school. Mike had heard it, even though he was enrolled in another Spanish I section.

> Mike: It helps with her, I guess, toning down or whatever they say she was. I really didn't want her, 'cause they said, like-Oh, she gives ya so much work and...I don't need that every day.

For Mike, then, the thought of so much work for a grade in a semi-required elective class that he was trying to "get out of the way" was apparently not attractive.

And, evidently, Mike was not alone. Several students, including Trevor, made vocal comments in class about their trips to the counseling office to seek a schedule change that would allow them to enroll in the other Spanish II section offered that hour. Apparently, Tyrone Johnson was successful in his attempt. After a brief stay in Mrs. Kraft's class at the beginning of the term, he later appeared on a fieldtrip as a part of Mr. MacNamara's section. For others, however, the attempts were futile, as it appeared that Mr. MacNamara's sections were full. No more than a glance at the empty chairs in the room revealed that Mrs. Kraft's section was not.

For Mrs. Kraft, a first-year teacher who also worked on a daily basis with the counselors, this was, indeed, an awkward position. It is difficult to build up a department and encourge students to enroll for a class where the workload is perceived as too heavy or is not commensurate with that in other sections. Mrs. Kraft apparently tried to adjust to the intricacies of the system.

And she was well-aware of the various adjustments that she had made. She told me, for example, in an early interview that she thought she might have covered more chapters first semester.

> Mrs.K: He [Mr.MacNamara] told me that he does eight chapters. I thought that I could do ten, but it was too much. When I wrote my syllabus, I put 8-10 chapters...I found eight was a good amount and I reviewed for a week before the final.

And so, the number of chapters to be covered was adjusted, the size and number of "packets" decreased, and the amount of oral Spanish used in class for functional purposes lessened as checks and balances on the workload within the organization took effect.

The Knowledge Load

How much one could be held responsible for learning in this classroom was also, to an extent, controlled by the system. As was discussed in Part I, there was no commonly agreed-upon measure of success in foreign language learning among teachers, students, parents and the school culture, other than the achievement of graduation credit or the fulfillment of college-entry requirements for curriculum and grade point. It appeared that a teacher had to "justify" keeping a student from either credit or requirement fulfillment, even if the student had apparently learned nothing. Mrs. Kraft and I discussed this in our final interview.

> Me: You know the--the proficiency movement that they talk about--that you're supposed to be not measuring for achievement, but that you're supposed to be looking for proficiency--the ability to use the language in a--

Mrs.K: Well, I couldn't go by that. I, I couldn't go by that because then Trevor wouldn't make it, because he doesn't know. Because he doesn't want to know.

Me: So, so he can still pass, then, even though-

Mrs.K: He can pass on doing the, the, the homework and participating in class, and then some of the quizzes, he studies the words and passes them.

Me: The vocabulary--

Mrs.K: But most of the time he doesn't study. That's what it is. I know that's what it is.

Me: But he can still--still get by.

Mrs.K: I can not justify--um--flunking him.

And, indeed, Mrs. Kraft needed to justify Trevor's failure to achieve not only to herself, but to his parents, and, on a regular basis, to the athletic department where he participated in both football and baseball. In an interview with Trevor, he expressed the bitterness that he and his father felt when Mrs. Kraft's report to the athletic department rendered him ineligible for a football game.

Me: And your goal is to--

Trevor: To get a C. Yea.

Me: And you plan to do one year of it [Spanish], then?

Trevor: My dad said, 'You're not goin'back in there.' I wouldn't wanna go, but---

Me: Why do you think that your dad said that?

Trevor: Well, see, I've came--I was ineligible for one game in football and my dad--I mean, he, he wants me to get good grades in school--he stresses that very much-but--um--also I mean he think, he wants, he likes me to be in sports. I mean this is a top priority, for me to be in sports. I mean he doesn't pressure me or anything, but, ya know--

Me: But he was--

Trevor: I mean he was athletic himself and, I dunno, he's just--

Me: Oh, really?

Trevor: He likes me to be in sports. I mean, I love sports. That's--that and school is about the only thing I do.

And fieldnotes and interviews show that Trevor's parents tried to keep in touch with Mrs. Kraft, both by phone and at parent-teacher conferences, doing what they could so that Trevor might both pass and stay eligible. They encouraged him to see Mrs. Kraft for extra help. And he did see her at lunchtime on several occasions. But both Mrs. Kraft and Mrs. Glouster felt that these sessions were not helpful. Mrs. Kraft expressed frustration, saying that she felt Trevor had developed a "closed mind to Spanish." Mrs. Glouster divided the responsibility apparently between Trevor's "mental block" and Mrs. Kraft's ethnicity.

> When Trevor had problems Mrs. Glouster said she encouraged him to "go to her," and he said, "I do" and she would tell him that he <u>did</u> understand it, stressing, "Yes, you do." Mrs. Glouster said Mrs. Kraft was "very kind" and "went out of her way to help him" but that "being a Spanish person or Mexican or whatever she calls herself," it probably "came easy to her" and that "she doesn't understand" how hard learning a language is. Mrs. Glouster also added that Trevor had told her that the class was "predominately Spanish kids."

But Trevor, himself, regularly expressed confidence that he could get a C in Spanish for the semester.

Me: Now tell me. You say your goal was to get a C in Spanish class and you'd feel successful if you did that. What do you think your chances are?

Trevor: This time. I dunno. She said I'm not doin' too well. She said--I--I feel that I'm doin'just as good as I did last marking period, but I--she's the teacher--so--

Me: What would make you think you're doing as well as you did last marking period?

Trevor: Well, you see, it's what--O.K. my dad last marking period--she talked to him and he, he said she said, 'If he turns in all the homework and stuff and all the stuff we do in class, I will give him a C.' That's what she said, 'cause she knew it was hard for me. And I've done that this marking period. I mean I got a C last marking period, so I just feel I should get one this time because I'm gonna be doin' book reports, so.

Me: So you think that will move up your grade?

Trevor: Yea, I think.

Me: Is it possible to get a C in a class and not learn anything?

Trevor: Um hum. Well, I'm doin' it right now.

Indeed, it appeared that failing a student could be more trouble than it was worth, since the burden of proof especially for the parents, depended, in large part, on whether the student was "trying," but not necessarily learning. Interestingly, Mrs. Kraft considered at least two more factors in making the decision to pass Solita and give Trevor a C. The first was the possibility that, as the teacher, she <u>was</u> at fault for their lack of progress. The second had to do with her perception that they would not continue their study of Spanish. Fieldnotes from a short interview after the final exam showed her recurring concern that she couldn't reach these two students.

> Trevor and Solita will "scrape by." They did all the "homeworks." Mrs. Kraft felt that she just couldn't fail a senior. She said that she felt that although Solita had a disadvantage by having another teacher the first semester, that others had done all right. She concluded that she

probably couldn't have taught her much over two semesters--that Solita and Trevor were similar, and that she hadn't had much luck with him.

During our final interview she described in a convoluted manner the way Trevor ended up with the C that he needed:

Me: What grade did he get?

Mrs.K: C. He got a C. He got a D in the exam, but I gave him for the final semester grade a C.

Me: (surprised) He got a D in the exam?

Mrs.K: Well, (2 seconds) close to a D.

Me: Geez, that surprises me, because--

Mrs.K: Close to a D. Close to a D. You know what I mean. I kind of averaged out what he was able to do. Surprisingly enough, what brought him up really very close to the D was the listening.

After discussing a cheating incident in the 7th hour, Mrs. Kraft turned her attention to Solita's grade.

Mrs.K: I think Solita cheated on that one test because it is impossible--

Me: --for her to have done--

Mrs.K: But anyway, that brought her, that brought her to the D, and, ah, with--

Me: So she got a D and Trevor got a C.

Mrs.K: Because, see, Solita didn't do all the homework and Trevor did, even things that I made him repeat it over again--he gave it back to me, and so you know what I mean. The way, what I felt is that even though pointswise maybe he wasn't that, but he could pass because he's not going to take any more language and he did try.

And so the student who was the most resistant to communication, who took more of the teacher's time than any other in this class, received a grade of C without demonstrating any real measure of achievement. In our interview, his mother indicated that the saga may not yet be over for her son.

> She said her "big concern now is college." She said she was afraid he might have to take it there.

Indeed, the requirement that he fulfilled to get into college may haunt him (and his teachers) again as he tries to get out of another layer in the educational organization.

A Counter-Reaction to the Easy A

It appeared by the end of the semester, however, that although Mrs. Kraft had made adjustments to accommodate the organizational culture and its various constituencies, she had started, perhaps, to find her place in the school culture. As students began to make scheduling choices for the upcoming school year, several were vocally insistant that they wanted to continue their study of Spanish with Mrs. Kraft. Tracey was particularly forceful in her statements that if she couldn't enroll in Mrs. Kraft's section, she would choose not to enroll at all in Spanish III and IV. In a later interview she compared her learning experience and her grade to that of a friend.

> Tracey: Well, what it is, is that Mr. Mac, I mean, he's probly a good teacher, but he just doesn't--I've never had him, but, ya know, just from what I see, ya know, and stuff, they're, like, 'Well, we never get tests and we never had to do this, and we never had to do that.'

'Cause I had Ms. Kraft and we'd read out loud, ya know, and we'd, ya know, do everything the same as we did this semester and, ya know. Now one of the girls--ah--Mileena Jones--ya know, who comes in there sometimes. She had Mrs. Kraft last year, and she would--she tried, ya know, cause she was gone for about a week or so and she came back and she was really behind, but I helped her and Mrs. Kraft, ya know, we both helped her, and, ah, she came back, ya know, she got a better grade and now she has Mr. Mac, and she still gets A's, but she still doesn't know a lot, ya know, she's real behind, ya know, on everything. I ask her and, like, ya know, they're like a chapter ahead of us, but, ya know, I know more than she does, ya know, so--

Me: How does she feel about that?

Tracey: She, she, um--well, she, she really wanted Mr. Mac because he doesn't do anything, ya know, and Mrs. Kraft always gives work and stuff, but--

Me: So she feels she's being successful?

Tracey: Right. She thinks she knows a lot (laugh) but she doesn't. Right.

In another interview, Doug Ellsworth described the low status of Spanish as a foreign language at Memorial High School. He saw the potential Mrs. Kraft had to turn that image around.

Doug: Well, I think it also depends on which language. I think that French in this school has a higher reputation.

Alonso: Yep.

Doug: It's more firmly entrenched and the teacher has a very good reputation. Ms. L--and that tends to attract more college-bound students, where Spanish, I think a lot of kids see that as an easy grade. I don't know why (laugh)--due to other teachers who--

Sara: It depends on the teacher, too.

Doug: I don't know. Next year after Mrs. Kraft's been teaching here a year, it may be different.

Me: How so? How do you think that may change?

Doug: Well, people may see that she's a hard teacher and may want to take her as a college prep class.

It appeared that Mrs. Kraft had made a good start in establishing herself as a teacher who cares about students and about the development of their language skills in Spanish. And even students who did not want to learn Spanish held her in high regard for her knowledge and efforts on behalf of those who did want to learn:

Don: Mrs. Kraft's cool. I really like her...She knows all about Spanish. When people try and learn Spanish, she'll help you out, ya know, if you need help--come after school or stay after or something--come in on your lunchtime. Lots of teachers might not do that, but she will, if ya need the help. She'll do that.

CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The purpose of this chapter is to summarize and interpret the findings of this study, to reflect on their significance and to consider broad implications and questions for further research.

Summary of the Findings

This study sought to stand back and take stock of what was happening in one foreign language classroom. The results are fascinating. They are at once frightening and encouraging to those of us who share concern for the education of both public school students and future teachers in the United States.

Probably the most significant finding in this study is the prevalence and strength of the organizational culture of schooling as it affected not only the daily patterns of interaction in the classroom but also the overall standards for measurable achievement and accountability. Therefore, the findings will be summarized and discussed in three sections: 1) the underlying goals and accompanying definitions of success of participants in this classroom and school organization; 2) the normative patterns of behavior in this classroom and school that encouraged or constrained cognitive growth, skill development and affective involvement; and 3) the transactive patterns within the overall organization that included an intricate currency of exchange

and a system of checks and balances determining the range of acceptable behaviors for all participants.

Multiple and Conflicting Definitions of Success

Over the years, American education, as a whole, has grappled with issues that accompany the espoused ideal of a free, public, equitable and quality education for all of America's youth. The lack of a clear and common mandate, and the adoption of multiple definitions of "success" is common to the overall organizational culture of schooling (Goodlad, 1984; Powell et al., 1985; and Sedlak et al., 1986). So, too, the scope and emphasis on foreign language instruction has been a part of public school curricular debate for at least the last fifty years. Ranging from the status of an academic frill to that of a vital national necessity, policymakers and practitioners in the field have had a hard time just keeping track of their image, much less their goals. In concert with these changes, students and the parents and counselors who advise them, have tried to keep up with the variable status of foreign language as it related to requirements for graduation, college entry and potential employment.

This overarching theme of accommodation in the face of paradoxical diversity was vividly highlighted in this beginning-level Spanish classroom. As discussed by Cohen in The Shopping Mall High School (Powell et al., 1985), the organizational arrangement in this setting, too, was such that students could "shop" for classes that might accommodate the majority of their needs, abilities and interests. The effectiveness of the organization, as a whole, could be measured in

terms of the extent to which students were potentially successful in these multiple endeavors.

It appeared that the underlying expressed need for the vast majority of students in this class was one of credentialing. For some students the final educational goal was the high school diploma. These students enrolled for foreign language to fulfill their humanities requirement in much the same way they chose to enroll for elective courses in art, music or dance. Other students in this classroom prepared for college entry. It was perceived that foreign language on the transcripts of these students was considered a "desirable" academic plus by colleges and universities, much like higher level courses in English or social studies.

Contrary to the image of the foreign language classroom suggested by Goodlad (1984), this heterogeneous combination of students embodied a relatively wide range of age and maturity levels and widely varying abilities in areas as diverse as basic study skills, levels of frustration, developed proficiencies in the use of English or Spanish, and motivations to learn or ever use another language.

Although foreign language courses were offered in Latin, German, French and Spanish, it appeared that, with the general exception of Hispanic students, the choice to study Spanish had less to do with its unique characteristics or practical application, than with its perceived less-rigorous academic status, the reputation of the full-time teacher, the rumored ease of acquisition and possible convenience of scheduling. There was some evidence that of the students enrolling for

foreign language, the less academically-able elected Spanish to fulfill their graduation or college entry requirements.

Hispanic students were encouraged to enroll in Spanish--both to preserve the links with their cultural heritage and to enroll in a class with a good chance for academic success. In this setting where communicative competence was stressed, already functionally bilingual students appeared to be challenged very little. Most of the other "Spanish kids" heard or attempted to use the language less frequently outside of class, and, therefore, found themselves on equal academic footing with their non-Hispanic peers. Their expressed motivation to learn the language, however, often included a well-developed intention to learn and use Spanish outside of class.

Although there is a depressing amount of evidence to support VanPatten's (1986) contention that American students don't study another language out of interest in the target language or culture, there was a definite feeling among the non-Hispanic students in this setting that they <u>might</u> want or need skills in functional Spanish in their future professional or occupational settings. In other words, I felt that the practical motivation to learn Spanish to meet a recognizable need was, at the least, on the verge of consciousness for these students.

The motivation of the teacher to stress the approach of communicative language acquisition over that of formal language learning points out yet another dimension in the wide range of definitions of language teaching/learning and, therefore, in the determination of "success" from a professional standpoint. It was interesting to note that she

perceived oral proficiency as the skill that looks best to the outside observer, but that she considered fundamental communicative literacy skill development to be equally as valuable.

Comparing the results of this research with the pilot study done at the university level was like a contrast in black and white. Basic assumptions concerning purpose and measures of success in foreign language learning differed considerably. The university-level students were articulate in their expression of a desire to develop second language conversational skills in French and to better understand Francophone cultures. They understood, however, that success in the course was primarily measured objectively in terms of grammatical accuracy, and they willingly participated in a point system that reflected such precision. The difficulty they experienced in precisely describing and analyzing the language in grammatical terms was blamed on deficient high school preparation in both English and foreign language. This study bears out their claim that, at least in classrooms like Mrs. Kraft's, they would not have been especially well-trained in grammatical analysis.

On the other hand, the high school students in this study appeared to be much less clear of their reasons to pursue a foreign language beyond their perceived notions of what was required for graduation or college entry. These students were not graded on their ability to precisely analyze the grammar nor to foster comparison with the English language. As communication was the goal, precision was valued much less than simply "trying" to use the words to get a message across. The teacher in the high school setting patiently encouraged and

dignified even the most fragile attempts to communicate. She consciously minimized the pressure of performance in order to encourage students to create with the language by combining and recombining learned elements. Despite the teacher's efforts to emphasize communication (as discussed in the next section), however, this high school classroom did not appear to be conducive to the meaningful exchange of ideas in Spanish. Indeed, in the final analysis, success was measured as much in terms of perceived student "effort" as in terms of measurable achievement or proficiency.

Normative Behavior Patterns

The results of this study appear to indicate that the classroom is not particularly conducive for the acquisition or practice of second language communicative skills. In accordance with Guthrie's research (1984, 1987), I found that there were multiple factors that seemed to thwart substantive communicative interchanges in this setting. They included: the physical arrangement of the classroom, the imbalance of both fluency and authority of the teacher, the constraints of time, and the perceived curricular expectations to cover the objectives of the textbook.

It appeared that the communication patterns in this Spanish classroom, even when they were sequenced and supported by the use of the textbook, were potentially frustrating to students since they differed from communication norms in other classes in at least two respects. First, because of the oral nature of many of the exercises, students in this language classroom appeared to perceive a greater

chance for "being put on the spot" to make their errors public. Second, the language itself got in the way of typical patterns for classroom communication. For example, simple directions, such as page numbers, around which teachers normally structure and order a lesson, often appeared to cause confusion rather than alleviate it in this setting. Likewise, the typical method of assessing student learning through question and answer became considerably more complex for both teacher and student in the foreign language classroom. Students in this setting often showed or reported that they understood the content of the question, but didn't command the language form to sufficiently communicate the response in Spanish. One student described this as the risk of "two wrongs."

The teacher in this study understood these unique characteristics of communication patterns in the foreign language classroom and made consistent, compassionate and competent efforts to lower what Krashen (Krashen & Terrell, 1983) terms the affective filter. She minimized the pressure of performance by dignifying the necessity of less-than-perfect practice without penalty and by creating a strong pattern of positive reinforcement coupled with an understood method of non-threatening correction.

Nevertheless, it was apparent that there was resistance to the functional use of spoken Spanish in classroom activities. Several students were actively and noticeably resistant. Much like a drop of ink in a glass of water, the words and actions of these students had the ominous potential to immediately disrupt communicative activities,

or never allow them to get fully started. The amount of effort it took to overcome the vocal resistance of even one student was considerable.

There were also routine instances of a more passive resistance when students simply disengaged from the classroom communication, drill or question/answer activities. When called on, they characteristically opened their book to the glossary, and with eyes down, uttered short, softly-spoken, one-word responses. On other occasions they chose to say "I didn't get that one," a response that at the same time avoided the pressure of wait time and the threat of an incorrect answer.

Transactive Patterns--Trying to Succeed

The complex transactive patterns that were established in this school and classroom setting essentially allowed participants to bargain issues of accountability and authority. As described in the literature by Cusick (1973, 1983), the academic bargain that takes place between students and educators in American high schools flourished in this school setting. Findings by Sedlak et al. (1986) indicated that "the bargain" did not extend to students who were motivated fundamentally by extrinsic, school-related rewards such as grade-point average. The results of this research, however, indicate that it was precisely these students who were most adept at negotiating such transactions. In fact, the grade was the currency of exchange used in the bargain, and it was understood and used not only in the school setting, but by parents, college admission boards and prospective employers. The grade was determined by an intricate combination of factors.

The concept of "trying" as it pertained to both communication and the achievement of a grade was particularly significant in this study. As previously discussed, trying to communicate involved for most students a certain amount of risk, a tolerance for error and ambiguity, and a subjective measurement of how well the message was communicated or understood.

On the other hand, trying to get a grade was considerably more structured, and potentially more complicated. It appeared that for those students to whom grades were a viable currency, a grade of C was the minimum level of "successful" achievement. However, it was the responsibility of the teacher to measure not only achievement, but also the extent to which the student was perceived to be "trying" to achieve.

Four variables were considered in the determination of the grade. These included test scores, homework, class participation and extra credit. It appeared that good test and quiz scores, alone, could be exchanged for a high grade. In fact, the achievement of high test scores nearly assured a high grade. Such scores could be attained at least two ways: through mastery of the material combined with careful test taking, or through "cheating" by copying the answers from a knowledgeable peer. The consequences of achieving very high grades were both positive and negative. Obviously, the positive effect was in terms of transcript currency--it raised the gradepoint average. On the negative side, however, was the risk of peer ridicule or jealousy, and the perceived uncomfortable responsibility to "help out" fellow students by sharing answers.

The two Hispanic students who enrolled in this class with already-developed communicative skills appeared effortlessly to receive A grades. One, however, quietly downplayed his abilities and essentially melted into the background. The other became a "discipline problem" as he used his ability to rechannel the flow of routine classroom communication and to serve as a strategic resource to other students.

It is important to note, however, that students who received low test scores did not necessarily receive similar grades. Three other factors were considered. Homework was a sure and quantifiable indicator of a student's effort. In this setting, most assignments were short practice exercises and appeared to measure the student's good faith rather than stretch his/her abilities.

Class participation was the third factor. Like homework, it was an indication of "trying." Such participation appeared to have multiple definitions within both the school and classroom cultures, but had at least four identifiable components: asking and answering questions, following acceptable norms for classroom behavior, attendance, and completion of tangible classroom assignments. It appeared students in this setting rarely asked questions about content, but more frequently initiated communication with the teacher to appear to be "on task."

Both the teacher and students expressed similar descriptions of the range of acceptable classroom behavior to show one was "trying." The teacher, however, expressed concern over the delicate affective line that separated an environment that was safe enough in which to freely try to communicate and a classroom that was effectively managed.

She used the participation grade as a last resort to force communication and manage behavior.

Attendance was the only clear and measurable form of participation. Just as a student who received good test scores could be assured of a high grade, students with poor attendance records, and no other indication of "trying," could safely fail. The school attendance policy explicitly supported this link between grades and class attendance.

The last measurable form of participation was the completion of written classroom assignments to be exchanged for participation credit. It appeared in this setting that the students most disengaged from efforts to functionally communicate in class were most concerned about turning in written assignments. Such efforts were construed by participants as "trying" or "making an effort." Likewise, they were described as keeping up with the "workload" of the class. Students frequently helped one another to complete such assignments.

The final variable in the determination of the grade in this setting was called extra credit. Students had the opportunity to turn in a written project and/or participate in Spanish Club activities. Approximately half of the students in this class received extra credit points toward the final determination of their grade.

Interaction of School and Classroom Cultures

It appeared in this setting that both the "workload" of the class and its "knowledge load" were influenced by checks and balances from the organizational culture. Both the teacher and students were well-aware of adjustments that were made between first and second

semester in lightening the load of what students were expected to do and what they were expected to know in Spanish. It appeared that some students had enrolled for Spanish precisely because of the reputation it had for ease of acquisition and for the accustomed relatively high return on investment of effort for grade currency. As a new employee, the teacher in this setting had to make difficult adjustments that allowed her to delicately balance her high standards of achievement with realities of enrollments. It appeared that by the end of her first year, she was beginning to develop her place in the organization.

In a related manner, and as significant, it appeared that the organization also controlled the knowledge-load that was expected of students in this setting. Because there was no commonly agreed upon measure of purpose or success in foreign language learning among professionals, students, or parents in this school culture, the teacher had to "justify" keeping a student from credit, even if the student had apparently learned little. It appeared that in order to give a student a grade lower than a C, measurable test results were not enough. It was the burden of the teacher to prove, without a reasonable doubt, that the student was not trying to succeed, that, as the professional, she was not at fault, and that the knowledge and skills developed in this class were necessary prerequisites to success in scheduled advanced Spanish courses.

Implications and Questions for Further Research
So What? Now What?

The implications stemming from the above conclusions can be considered from immediate and global perspectives. Both the participants in the organizational school settings and those who determine their course through policy and research are faced with similar concerns for purpose, authority and accountability as they relate to the teaching and study of foreign language in American classrooms.

Although it would appear that the students in this classroom enrolled in Spanish with an expressed purpose to fulfill academic credentialing requirements, there is ample evidence that they were conscious of potential occupational application of the skills they might develop. A recent synthesis of research on strategies for motivating students to learn (Brophy, 1987) indicates that people do not invest effort on tasks that they perceive will not lead to valued outcomes. The results of this research imply that, at least these American students, see the potential need to develop basic functional communicative skills in Spanish. Further research might examine the strength of this motivation and the implications it has for teaching not only Spanish, but other foreign languages as well.

Further research might also uncover perceived differences in status between foreign languages in American schools. This study indicates that for these students, at least, Spanish was considered the easiest of the foreign languages to learn, and the one with the lowest academic status.

This research also leads to some interesting questions about Hispanic students who are encouraged to enroll for Spanish to carry on their cultural heritage, develop literacy skills, or get an easy grade. This study, like others dealing with high school-aged Hispanics (Orfield, 1986; Matute-Bianchi, 1986), shows that these students cannot be treated as a group. Some come to Spanish class already communicatively competent in bilingual homes. This study indicates that the boredom they experience in a class designed for beginning students can cause them to withdraw or to cause disruption in the flow of the lesson. Other Hispanic students may come to an introductory Spanish class with very limited exposure to spoken Spanish, and without any literacy skills. Such students are as diverse in background and ability as any student beginning to develop literacy skills in a native language. Their Hispanic surnames, however, may lead their peers to suspect and resent them for an advantage they may not possess. Further research is needed to describe the extent of the problem and examine possibilities for building on the diverse language competencies Hispanic students bring to the Spanish classroom.

It would be naive, however, to discuss these implications of motivation to learn foreign language, language status, and Hispanic competencies without a call for continued research into the organization of schooling as it accommodates our American cultural system--one with a history of difficulty in dealing with language plurality and multi-ethnic egalitarian ideals. Ferguson and Heath (1981) and Kjolseth (1983) point out the sharp distinction between the language use of immigrants and the foreign languages taught in schools. Perhaps

for social and political reasons, the use of the ethnic languages has been historically discouraged in American schools, and foreign language is treated as a subject to be learned, not a skill to be employed among peers.

With this underlying social context in mind, further research is also needed to carefully examine complicated issues of curricular authority as they relate to recommendations for the study of foreign languages in American schools. Multiple sources of power command thoughts, opinions and behaviors in the study of foreign language. Federal and state authorities fashion and publicize guidelines for an academically and economically competitive citizenry. Teachers use their considerable power to translate this ever-changing ideal into a personal, daily reality within the dynamic organization of schooling. And, indeed, students within that organization wield the bottom-line authority as they individually decide what is in their best interest to put into and take out of their study of foreign language. The distance between the idealistic recommended curriculum and the so-called "learned curriculum" needs to be more carefully considered in the research. Those in a position of formal authority to shape and/or change foreign language curriculum would benefit from a clear picture that described both explicit and implicit purposes for language study in light of all levels of curricular authority. With that in mind, it would be important to consider if those purposes, when actualized, could be accomplished in a classroom setting, with mutually agreeable and measurable outcomes and within a timeframe acceptable to all of the powerful constituents.

Issues of accountability that were raised in this study have implications beyond the foreign language classroom. If this study and others that preceded it (such as Powell, 1985; Cusick, 1973; and Sedlak, 1986) are painting an accurate picture, then the grade as a currency of exchange in our educational system can not really be considered a measure of academic progress. For some students, achieving may still be succeeding in the classroom; but apparently for students who have neither the desire nor ability to achieve, trying to succeed is an acceptable substitute.

The issues of teacher accountability that were evident in this study also have implications for the development of realistic teacher education programs and "methods" courses. The organizational pressures that are felt in the classroom may not be anticipated by beginning teachers, nor recognized by veterans. For example, the workload and knowledge load may be set by the classroom professional, but they are negotiated through the total organization of which both the teacher and the students are a part. The amount of attention and respect for any given subject matter may rise and wane with public whim. The implied notion in education that a "good" teacher can internally motivate, challenge, fully meet all of the academic and affective objectives, adjust to heterogenous learning abilities and styles, keep enrollments up and discipline referrals down in a class that students and their parents may be trying to "get out of the way" on the road to a credential, is unrealistic, at best. It is, however, the reality that Maria Kraft, a "good teacher" faces daily.

It is hoped that studies such as this one will serve to "unwrap" the reality of the classroom to the end that issues of purpose, authority and accountability in American education may be better understood.

Personal Reflections
Between the Tower and Terra Firma

The perspectives of the researcher and the practitioner differ considerably. When one attempts to examine the educational setting from both points of view, great care needs to be taken that the picture seen from each is honest, clear and in appropriate focus.

This research study was undertaken while I was on a sabbatical leave of absence from my own Spanish classroom. My graduate training in fieldwork research methods and my pilot study done in a university classroom had demanded that I develop a researcher's perspective. Looking at my own "territory," I knew, was potentially difficult, and I took extra precautions in the ongoing analysis of my data to make sure that I examined this particular classroom from an unbiased and somewhat detached perspective. I scrupulously monitored my assertions, making sure that they came from within the setting and not from my own experience.

As the data base grew and patterns began to develop in this classroom I could feel myself growing more and more detached, as if I were ascending an exterior elevator, of the kind that serve hotel towers. Small occurrences that took place on a daily basis began to converge to form a mosaic of recognizable, and not always hospitable,

educational terrain that extended in all directions. The further I rose from "ground level" the clearer the foreign language classroom became as part of the complicated panorama of schooling. It was from the top of this figurative tower that I attempted to analyze my data and draw conclusions and implications from this research.

Throughout the analysis phase, however, I was quite conscious of the fact that I would be returning to the "ground level" of my own classroom, now having seen a potentially-tortuous future journey.

Erickson (1986) maintains that the most difficult part of presenting findings of research to insiders of a culture is clarifying that information which insiders already know to be true, but don't want to acknowledge. This research study rang painfully true to me, and as I made a dizzying descent from the tower to terra firma I began to lose not only a clear perspective of the classroom I was to face, but I could feel an accompanying loss in my locus of control as a professional. The power of the organizational culture of schooling seemed to be overwhelming. The treaties and bargains already established in the credentialing process appeared to require me to accept frustration and mediocrity as a part of my reality. There is no university course that prepares the researcher/teacher for such re-entry shock.

It has taken me several months to readjust my perspective. But now, once again with my own students, I have refocused my point of view and regained a more realistic locus of professional control. On one hand my consciousness has been raised and in my reflective moments I am better able to plan the journey my students and I travel together. And, on the other hand, I suppose I've returned to a state much like

the bumblebee who doesn't know that it is aerodynamically not designed to fly; despite the frustration and organizational pressures, I do see the impossible taking place. For it is only from terra firma that a teacher can witness in the faces and voices of students the "ah-hahs" of learning, the pride in accomplishment, and the expressions of empowerment that young people show as they tentatively, but successfully, communicate in another language.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Results: Survey of Student Perceptions of "Trying" and "Success" in Spanish Class

Appendix A. Results: Survey of Student Perceptions of "Trying" and "Success" in Spanish Class

Name: _____ Grade in School This Year: _____

THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS WERE COLLECTED OVER THE TERM AS DEFINITIONS OF THE CONCEPTS OF "TRYING" AND OF "SUCCESS" IN THIS SPANISH CLASS. PLEASE TAKE A MINUTE TO CHECK ALL OF THE STATEMENTS THAT YOU FEEL APPLY TO YOU.

n=16

I feel that I "tried" by...

12 1. having a good attendance record in class.

13 2. having materials ready that I needed to bring to class (book, pencil, handouts, etc.)

11 3. arriving on time for class.

10 4. behaving in class so as not to "goof off" and bother or make fun of others.

3 5. doing some homework.

7 6. doing the majority of the homework.

5 7. doing all of the homework.

5 8. asking questions in class when I didn't understand something.

4 9. frequently answering questions in class with a high degree of accuracy.

7 10. frequently answering questions in class with some degree of accuracy.

7 11. frequently completing in-class exercises with a high degree of accuracy.

5 12. frequently completing in-class exercises with some degree of accuracy.

9 13. remaining academically honest.

6 14. showing outside interest in Spanish through Spanish Club.

4 15. showing outside interest in Spanish through coming in for extra help between classes or by doing extra credit projects.

6 16. using Spanish in settings other than the classroom or Spanish Club.

4 17. studying Spanish on a regular basis outside of class.

2 18. other?(please list)

1- Talking Spanish to brother.
2- Talking regularly with family in Spanish all my life.

I feel "successful" in this Spanish class because....

11 1. I achieved here an adequate knowledge of the vocabulary and grammar to be able to continue confidently in a Spanish 3 class taught in the manner of this teacher.

10 2. I received a grade that will help my grade point average.

11 3. I personally enjoyed the learning experience.

4 4. I feel it helped me in my ability to make or strengthen friendships with Spanish-speaking friends.

6 5. I feel it helped me in my ability to strengthen family traditions/ties.

10 6. I developed adequate skills in the use of the vocabulary and structure to to able to use my Spanish outside of the classroom in understanding, reading and speaking Spanish (with a beginning level proficiency)

5 7. I pleased my parents.

7 8. I received credit for foreign language as a college pre-requisite.

11 9. I received credit for foreign language as a humanities graduation requirement.

4 10. I received a passing grade.

2 11. I received a grade of C.

12 12. I received a grade of A or B.

— 13. Other?

1 yr. = 3 ½ yr. = 1
2 yr. = 5
3 yr. = 3
4 yr. = 4

How much Spanish do you plan to study in high school? ____year/s

What factors influenced you to arrive at this choice?

ONCE AGAIN, MANY THANKS FOR BEING YOU AND FOR BEING HONEST WITH ME IN MY EFFORTS TO UNTANGLE THE INSIDER"S PERSPECTIVE OF THE FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLASSROOM.

HAVE A GREAT SUMMER VACATION!

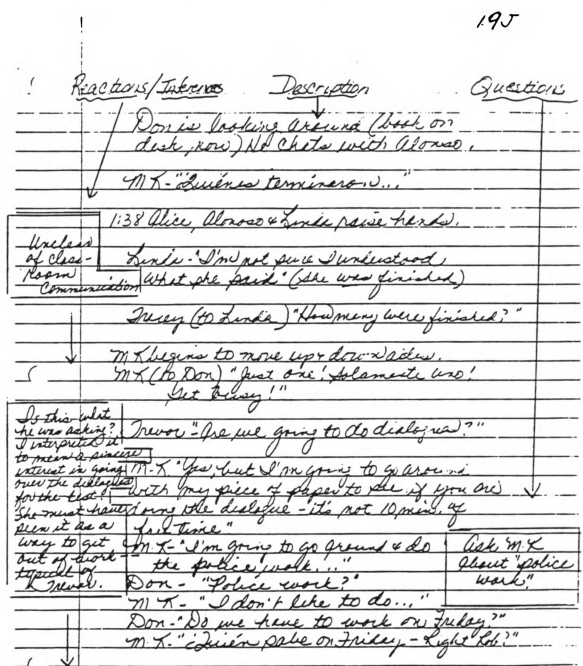
Linda Roberts

APPENDIX B

Copy of a Page from Fieldnotes, March 24

(Names changed to ensure anonymity)

Appendix B. Copy of a Page from Fieldnotes, March 24
(Names changed to ensure anonymity)



APPENDIX C

Mrs. Kraft's Spanish II Course Outline

Appendix C. Mrs. Kraft's Spanish II Course Outline.

SPANISH II COURSE OUTLINE

PREREQUISITES: Spanish I or equivalent.

PURPOSE: To learn the Spanish language and culture. Emphasis will be placed on the skills of listening, speaking, writing and reading, and the focus of the course will be on developing the students' capacities to use the language.

REQUIRED TEXTBOOK AND MATERIALS:

Nuestros Amigos.
A two-pocket folder is also required.
Students are responsible for the textbook issued to them. Books must be returned in good condition.

COURSE OBJECTIVES:

1.- The student will demonstrate a control of the grammar and the sound system of the language appropriate to Spanish II.

2.- The student will demonstrate his/her ability to comprehend and communicate orally with accuracy appropriate to Spanish II.

3.- The student will demonstrate his/her ability to comprehend written material and write with accuracy appropriate to Spanish II.

4.- The student will demonstrate his/her ~~ABILITY~~ knowledge and awareness of the Spanish culture with accuracy appropriate to Spanish II.

COURSE OUTLINE :

Eight to ten units will be covered(this may vary according to the needs of the students.)
These units include: vocabulary, written and oral exercises, dialogs, pronunciation drills, reading selections, exploration of grammar structures such as preterite of AR ER and IR verbs, future tense, direct and indirect objects, the personal a, the progressive tense, diminutive endings possesive forms, more irregular verbs, comparatives, pronouns after prepositions, reflexive pronouns, ordinal numbers, numbers from 100 to 1000.

-1-

COURSE OUTLINE: Class handouts will enrich the vocabulary and the student's knowledge, other activities such as: listening comprehension exercises, recitation (choral and individual) films, tapes, written exercises, quizzes, unit tests, writing short controlled compositions, cultural activity days, Spanish Club activities and other special projects assigned by the teacher.

GRADING: A point system will be used for grading. Points will be earned for participating in class activities, homework, speaking, listening and writing activities, quizzes and tests.

Grading will be on a straight scale:

90-100-- % A
80-89 % B
70-79 % C
60-69 % D
59-0 % E

EXTRA CREDIT

Students may earn a maximum of 15 extra credit points per marking period if:

a) the student prepares an extra credit project description form (I will give you these) and submits it to the teacher at least three weeks before the end of the marking period.
b) The project receives teacher approval.
c) The work is submitted one week before the end of the marking period. Late extra credit projects will not be accepted.

Quizzes and unit tests.

Quizzes will be given on regular basis over the material covered in class, tests will be given at the end of each unit.

Keep your class handouts and corrected assignments carefully!

You will need them to study for the quizzes, tests and the final exam.

Tests and quizzes will consist of listening, reading, writing exercises.

Dates will be announced in class.

COURSE POLICY FOR FINAL EXAM:

All Spanish II students will take the final exam.

SIX WEEK GRADES:

The toal of all percentages is added up and divided to determine the grade.

Appendix C. (cont'd)

SEMESTER GRADE: Each marking period counts one-quarter, and the final exam counts one quarter. These are totaled and divided by four for the final grade.

COURSE POLICY FOR MAKE-UP WORK: The student must see the teacher for the make-up work as soon as she-he returns to school. For each day of class missed, one school day will be allowed for make-up work to be completed, unless other arrangements are made with the teacher.

HOMEWORK: Homework will not be graded, but credit is given for each completed assignment. Homework is due as the student enters the class. Arrangements must be made in advance with the teacher to make up homework for excused absences only. Assignments which are not correctly done must be corrected and returned to teacher before credit is given. Obvious copying results in no credit for either participant.

CLASS PARTICIPATION: Class participation includes having your book and other materials, taking notes in class, keeping your class handouts in a two-pocket folder, listening, speaking, answering questions in class, completing assignments given in class, small and large group participation.

CLASSROOM EXPECTATIONS:

Foreign language classes are unique. We will spend much of the class time listening to and speaking Spanish. Therefore:
Students must concentrate during class.
Students must listen not only to the teacher but to the other students as they ask and answer questions.
Self-discipline and respect for others are essential in this classroom.
Come prepared with your text, pencil and folder. Wait for the bell to ring.
No lining up by the door at the end of class.
You cannot speak clearly if you are chewing gum or eating candy. No pop allowed in class either. Points will be taken off if you chew gum or eat candy in class.
See your teacher if you need help!
I am available during lunch hour, and before and after school.

Appendix C. (cont'd)

YOUR ATTITUDE WILL AFFECT YOUR GRADE.

A poor attitude such as talking, visiting, doing other homework, writing notes, sleeping breaking the rules, being disruptive, not bringing the required materials to class, not participating, not completing the assignments given will result in points taken off. In the other hand, a good attitude and full participation will raise you to a higher grade. Students will not need to leave the class except in emergencies.

I strictly adhere to the attendance policy and [redacted] Code of Conduct. Please pay special attention to the paragraph below:

"Students are required to attend each class at least 85% of the total class sessions. (78 days) Absences may result in the reduction of academic grade in any class due to work not made up or failure to participate in a class activity which cannot be made up.

I have read and understood the course outline and classroom rules for Spanish II.

_____
Parent or guardian

_____
student

_____
date

-4-

APPENDIX D

Memorial High School's Memorandum to Parents Regarding Student Failure

Appendix D. Memorial High School's Memorandum to Parents Regarding Student Failures

[redacted] SCHOOL DISTRICT
[redacted] HIGH SCHOOL
Phone [redacted] DATE _____

MEMORANDUM TO PARENTS

Dear _____

Concerning _____

I have checked the items below which I believe are responsible for:

⬡ FAILURE

_____ Student fails to bring book, pencil, assignment, etc.
_____ Excessive absence has affected the student's work.
_____ Work missed because of absence has NOT been made up.
_____ Daily assignments and/or homework are NOT prepared.
_____ Student does NOT use class time to advantage.
_____ Student does NOT follow directions carefully.
_____ Student gives up too readily.
_____ Student has had very low scores on periodic quizzes.
_____ Student does NOT appear to be interested in improving his work.
_____ Student fails to seek out extra help.
_____ Student does NOT pay enough attention during explanations.
_____ Student does TOO MUCH talking and/or other disturbing behavior.

COMMENTS:

If you have any questions concerning this mid-marking period report, please call us. We would be pleased to arrange a conference with you if you desire.

Sincerely yours,

_____
Teacher

_____ _____
Counselor Course

- -

TEAR OFF AND HAVE THE STUDENT RETURN TO THE TEACHER NAMED ABOVE

I have discussed this letter with my student.

Thank you,

_____ _____
Date Parent/Guardian Signature

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REFERENCES

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